

THE INTERNATIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE

The Roosevelt Social Security Act

THOMAS GREGORY

American Labor Comes of Age

GEORGE F. MILES

Britain Stoops to Conquer

BERN BRANDON

"Fascisme Assassin"

EDWARD CHAMBERS

Lumpenliterati

D. SWIFT

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The International CLASS STRUGGLE

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A Letter to the POUM

We print below a letter discussing some of the burning issues raised in the course of the present civil war in Spain. The issues discussed are precisely the ones which caused the fire of the combined socialist and official communist forces to be concentrated recently upon the Workers Party of Marxist Unity in Spain, in an effort to secure its suppression. The document was sent to the POUM by the Buro of the International Communist Opposition.—EDITOR.

* * *

Dear Comrades:

In answer to one of Comrade Thalheimer's questions, Comrade Arquer asked that those working class organizations outside of Spain sympathetic to the POUM offer their "criticism and suggestions on the course of the civil war and the revolution because," as he put it, "we

are internationalists and because our struggle is of world-wide import and, as such, of great interest to the world proletariat."

The Bureau of the International Communist Opposition has availed itself of this opportunity to present some suggestions and proposals to the POUM based on information gathered by Comrade Thalheimer on his recent stay in Catalonia and on the well-known position of Comrades Arguer and Nin on the decisive questions of the Spanish revolution.

The I.C.O. fully agrees with the POUM that the Spanish revolution will teach the international labor movement basic lessons, that the decisive question in the Spanish revolution is the realization of a socialist or proletarian revolution and not the defense of bourgeois democracy, and finally, that the civil war and the realization of the proletarian revolution are inextricably bound up, and that there can be no victory in the civil war unless there is a proletarian revolution.

Our proposals are designed primarily for Catalonia as the most advanced section of Spain but apply also to the rest of the country.

1. THE ORGANIZATION OF A PROLETARIAN STATE

In order to effect the organization of a proletarian state the POUM has issued the following general slogan: "Formation of a workers and peasants government based on committees of workers, combatants and peasants." It has proposed the calling of constituent bodies composed of delegates elected by these committees. We quite agree with this slogan. However, in our opinion, it is not sufficient merely to reiterate it in its abstract form. It is now a question of demonstrating to the masses of workers what concrete steps must be taken in order to advance from the existing form of workers' control to a workers' and peasants' government. The POUM is undoubtedly correct when it states that parliamentarism has outlived its usefulness in Spain. But such criticism remains negative unless the POUM states simultaneously what organs, what forms of organizations will replace parliament. In answer to this question Comrade Arguer, as well as Comrade Nin, pointed to the *trade unions* as the dominant political concentration-points of the working class.

The trade unions are indeed the broadest proletarian mass organizations in Catalonia, determining in conjunction with the political parties the composition of the central and local organs which are entrusted with supreme political, economic, and military power.

This role of the trade unions in Catalonia is historically based on the fact that they represent traditionally the broadest class organizations of the proletariat and that the trade unions, the CNT (trade union movement led by anarchists) in particular, have won the confidence of broad masses of the working class as the banner bearers of revolutionary struggle. In this respect Spain differs both from Russia and

from Germany. In the former there did not and could not exist broad mass trade unions before 1917; in the latter the trade unions were broad mass organs they were the handmaidens of imperialism and the bourgeoisie, especially during the World War, thanks to their reformist leaders. They could not possibly become the leaders of the November revolution of 1918.

In Spain, too, it is becoming evident that the trade unions are not the final and adequate organizational base for the proletarian state. This has been brought out by the tendency of reformist trade union leaders of the UGT to admit petty bourgeois elements into the unions, elements which have no right to belong to unions. The POUM very correctly has criticized this tendency and is fighting against it. The admission of petty bourgeois elements into the trade unions will prevent the trade unions from fulfilling their tasks as the representatives of the workers in a bourgeois or a proletarian state. On the other hand, however, the dictatorship of the proletariat presupposes an alliance of the working class with the petty bourgeoisie, particularly the small peasants and tenant-farmers. If these elements are admitted into the trade unions, the specific character of the unions is lost and it becomes impossible for them to carry out their special functions as trade unions. If, on the other hand, they are not admitted, the petty bourgeoisie is deprived of a necessary broad class organization thru which it could ally itself with the proletariat in the exercise of political, economic and military power. In other words, they cannot be admitted into the trade unions and yet they must be admitted in order to cement a political alliance of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie against fascism. All of which means that the trade unions cannot *at one and the same time* represent the economic interests of the workers and function as the organs of political power of the working class and its ally, the petty bourgeoisie. The trade unions cannot discharge both functions at once; they are too narrow to be the political arm of the working class. Hence, these functions must be separated.

We see, then, that in Spain, too, there must be found organs broader even than the trade unions for the exercise of proletarian political power. In our opinion, this means that "committees of workers, combatants and peasants" (inclusive of urban petty bourgeoisie) must be formed on a mass scale. The name matters little. The point is, to form:

1. Committees composed of workers chosen by all workers on a factory basis. If it is true that the Catalan workers are 100% organized into trade unions, as Comrade Nin maintains, then these committees will indeed represent the trade unions at the same time but their functions as workers committees will be of a political rather than a trade union nature.

Thru these committees the workers will have achieved class unity even tho trade union unity has not yet been accomplished. Political parties striving to strengthen their influence among the workers will be able to

do so without endangering unity of action. Thru the medium of these committees the political development of the entire working class will be greatly accelerated. More direct representation, moreover, will weaken the bureaucratic elements in the trade unions. It is understood that the workers must retain the right to recall any of the delegates to these committees so that these committees at all times reflect the immediate and present political development of the working class.

2. Committees of small peasants, tenant farmers and urban petty bourgeois elements. These committees will serve as the broad class organization for the petty bourgeoisie as a class.

3. Committees of combatants, militiamen, Civil guards and soldiers. Not until such committees are actually organized does the slogan of a workers and peasants government issued by the POUM assume practical significance. As long as such organs are not formed this slogan remains abstract.

The formation of these organs will serve the purpose of:

- a. Completely eliminating the remaining forces of the bourgeois state apparatus—an absolute necessity;
- b. Safeguarding simultaneously the broadest possible self-government of the workers and the necessary state centralization;
- c. Assuring "revolutionary discipline" on the basis of the broadest workers democracy and curbing those who would introduce dictatorial powers over the head of the working class;
- d. Establishing the base of an alliance of the working class with the petty bourgeoisie. This will *accelerate* the liquidation of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties and at the same time strengthen the tie between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie *under the leadership of the working class*.
- e. Furthermore, as a result of close collaboration within these committees of working class and petty bourgeois representatives tactical errors on the part of the working class in its relations to the petty bourgeoisie will be avoided or at least speedily corrected. We point to the agricultural crisis, as an example.
- f. This proposed organization will create the organizational basis for a proletarian army and safeguard against the return to a bourgeois army.
- g. The trade unions will retain their specific character and at the same time bring their full weight to bear upon the political scene. Such workers committees will, in addition, be instrumental in establishing trade union unity and in breaking down the resistance of certain trade union bureaucrats against unity.

Some of the suggestions voiced against our proposals are as follows:

1. A considerable section of the working class is at the front. An election without the militia will give an inadequate picture. That is

true, but there are really no overwhelmingly technical obstacles which prevent the participation of militiamen, Civil Guards and soldiers in elections. Its feasibility was proven by the Russians during the civil war when the Red Army soldiers participated in the elections of soviets. If the active fighters will participate in the elections of committees, it will be necessary for their political commissars to increase their activities with regard to political instruction and training, which, in turn, will necessitate relieving the commissars of some of their technical duties.

2. The fear has been expressed that in such elections the POUM would fare worse than it does under the present system. Aside from the fact that this fear is unfounded the objection is not a legitimate one. True revolutionary leadership must be based on genuine support from below.

We propose that the executive committee of the POUM work out a detailed plan along these lines, and present it officially to the Council of the Generalidad and to the workers organizations of the entire country for discussion.

2. A UNITED REVOLUTIONARY PARTY OF THE PROLETARIAT

Comrade Arguer does not believe that a united party of the proletariat is possible or even necessary. In his opinion, such a party would transform the "proletarian dictatorship" into a "party dictatorship" against the proletariat and against the minorities within the Party, destroy proletarian democracy, paralyze the inner political life of the labor movement in general, in short, conflict with revolutionary Marxism. We are of the opinion that this position is untenable and that sooner or later it will seriously endanger the revolution.

Let us analyze the problem. What is the reason for the existence of several parties within the working class of Spain? Obviously, the existence of basically different views within the working class on the *fundamental problems of the revolution*, in particular, the question of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, thus involving the whole concept of the proletarian dictatorship. Without an agreement on these fundamental questions by the majority of the working class the proletarian revolution cannot be carried to a successful conclusion. Only when the majority of the working class consciously approves the aims and principles of the proletarian revolution is it possible to gain victory and to retain state power. Once such ideological unity is achieved, the existence of various proletarian parties is no longer justified and the way is paved for a united communist party. Proletarian democracy has nothing to do with a state of affairs in which one party of the working class agitates against these very things and for the proletarian dictatorship. Proletarian democracy means primarily that ideological unity be achieved not thru violence but thru comradely discussion. The instance of the Paris Commune has demonstrated that the co-existence of parties with

entirely different views (the Proudhonists, the Blanquists, the Marxists, etc.) paralyzed the Commune in decisive moments and prevented decisive actions. On the other hand, however, differences which arise in the heat of the civil war cannot always be settled merely thru amicable discussions but may sometimes lead to extremely sharp conflicts. We do not believe that the political and ultimate organizational unity of the revolutionary working class in Catalonia and in Spain in general will be realized overnight. Nor do we believe that it will come about "spontaneously." It is, therefore, the task of the POUM as the only party which is carrying out a correct communist policy to take the initiative in this field also and to come out for a political and organizational unification of the working class on a communist basis. We believe that such a step would strengthen the influence of the POUM among the masses and that it would greatly facilitate the chances for victory over the reformist and opportunist tendencies now rampant in the labor movement. It is understood, of course, that such a perspective would call for a sharp struggle against reformism and opportunism, and, by no means, for the reverse.

In order to make the victory of the proletarian revolution possible, the class consciousness of the majority of the working class must be raised to the level of communism. The destruction of the mass influence of non-communist organizations really means the destruction of the last remnants of bourgeois ideology in the working class.

3. RELATION TO THE SOVIET UNION AND TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

Answering the question as to what the relationship between a proletarian Spain and the Soviet Union would be, Comrade Arquer stated that it would be one of solidarity and fraternity and that revolutionary Spain would defend the Soviet Union against the attacks of international imperialism. We fully agree with this statement and are convinced that such are the sentiments of the Spanish working class as a whole. However, Comrade Arquer argues the possibility of the existence of a proletarian international without the Russians, without the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. To us this represents an irreconcilable contradiction. How can there be a relation of fraternity and solidarity between the two countries when each forms the center of a revolutionary international? To exclude the C.P.S.U. means to fight against it. These two proletarian states cannot remain on a friendly footing if their leading political parties are hostile to each other. If Arquer talks of the duty to defend the S.U. against international imperialism, he recognizes the S.U. as a socialist state. As matters stand now, of course, there can be no immediate talk of the support of the S.U. by the Spanish working class. At present, it is the Soviet Union that is aiding the Spanish workers. It is true that Soviet support is insufficient and that

the S.U. made a number of errors in its foreign policy. For this very reason the POUM as the leading revolutionary party of Catalonia ought to take the initiative in coming to an agreement with the C.P.S.U. without, of course, making any concessions to the non-communist slogan of the defense of bourgeois democracy. We think it very unlikely that the C.P.S.U. will refuse to recognize the leading revolutionary party once the Spanish revolution is successful. We agree that no revolutionary party can afford to make concessions to the opportunist course of the Comintern as expressed by the C.P. of Spain and the PSUC (the united party of socialists and communists in Catalonia). We also agree that the POUM must carry on a sharp struggle against the non-communist policy of the PSUC and the C.P. in Spain. We maintain, however, that the leading party of the Soviet Union, by virtue of the socialist base of its state, must and will take into account the new international situation which will result from a victory of the Spanish proletariat. The monopoly which the C.P.S.U. now holds in the C.I. will and must be broken once another proletarian revolution is victorious, and, subsequently, the bureaucratic regime will yield to inner-party democracy in the C.I. and its various sections.

It is our opinion, and we believe yours also, that the organizations represented at the Brussels Conference cannot form the basis for a new international because they are too heterogeneous and because their views on the fundamental problems of the revolution are too divergent. The rejuvenation of the C.I. can be based only on the principles of communism which have been concretized thru the experiences of the Russian and the Spanish revolutions. The perspective of the I.C.O. at present is rather the concentration of international cadres, the formation of an international labor movement on the basis of communist principles and tactics. Such an international group will work out a tactical program based on the revolutionary experiences of the world proletariat. Such a group must fight for the return of the C.I. to communist principles and to inner-party democracy and cannot afford to ignore the C.P.S.U. These are our views and we are convinced that your experiences in the present struggle confirm their correctness.

American Labor Comes of Age

By GEORGE F. MILES

“ELDORADO in the world's history has any social movement achieved such speedy and spectacular success as has the Committee for Industrial Organization.

“The establishment of unionism in the steel industry and the winning of an agreement from the Carnegie-Illinois Corporation, chief subsidiary of United States Steel, have broken the backbone of employing class opposition to labor organization in the United States.

“The whole battle has not been won yet, it is true. But it has begun under such favorable auspices and with such a series of successes in the most strategic industries as to make the ultimate victory—strong unions in all the great industries—seem inevitable.”

Thus runs a statement by the C.I.O. estimating the first rounds in the great battle for unionism in the basic industries of this country.

That this statement is no exaggeration must be evident to all. The C.I.O. has succeeded in a remarkably short time to change completely the physiognomy of America's trade union movement. Since the beginning of this century it has become increasingly and most painfully clear year by year that the American Federation of Labor was not keeping pace with the growth of the American working class. More than that, it was lagging most in the decisive mass production and basic industries. The relatively new automobile, oil, rubber and radio fields remained practically untouched. In the steel industry the blow at unionism delivered by the Carnegie interests in the course of the Homestead strike of 1892 seemed to have numbed the A. F. of L. Almost three decades elapsed before another effort—even the half-hearted and craft-divided—was made and then once again the union in the field was permitted to sink back into an apathy from which only the C.I.O. was able to arouse it.

Operating in a country which stands first in the power and strength of its mass production industries, the A. F. of L. presented the anomalous situation of hardly being represented in these industries. Even as late as the 1936 convention the A. F. of L. reported 19,000 members for the auto union, 8,500 in the rubber industry, 9,200 in steel and 40,000 in oil. These represented an infinitesimal fraction of the total organizable working class in these industries. This was proved when the C.I.O., after a few months of hard work, lifted the membership of the auto union to the 300,000 mark. The steel workers have passed the 200,000 mark. It is now undertaking simultaneous campaigns in the oil and textile industries in an attempt to organize the two and a half million workers involved.

In the short span of its life the C.I.O. has stirred to its very depth

totally new layers of American workers—the mass of the unskilled, consisting in large number of mountaineer and poor farmer elements drawn into the maelstrom of industry during the great extension of the mass production industries. It is these elements, upon whom organized labor looked in the past with fear and misgivings, who were in the forefront of the recent battles and gave a good account of themselves.

In this sense it is appropriate to say that a new labor movement is arising since totally new and hitherto untouched layers of the working class are being tapped for the creation of those vigorous, militant industrial organizations of the C.I.O. With crushing conviction the C.I.O. has proved to those who honestly doubted the validity of the claims for industrial organization that it is the only way in which American labor can and will be organized.

NEW PROBLEMS

But the very successes of the C.I.O. have created new problems for the trade union movement. These must now be discussed.

On March 4 of this year the executive council of the A. F. of L. issued mandatory orders to the city and state federations of labor to exclude all local organizations whose parent bodies were associated with the C.I.O. This open declaration of war is of interest in two respects. In the first place it constitutes a modification of the council's course pursued since September 3, 1936. On that day, two months before the opening of the A. F. of L. convention in Tampa, Fla., the executive council suspended the 10 international unions affiliated with the C.I.O. This decision to suspend rather than expel one and a quarter million organized workers was part of the strategy intended to achieve a slow and painless ejection of a minority which seriously threatened to become a majority, without the necessity of resorting to “violent” measures. Besides, this apparently mild course suited well the temperament of this group of incompetents and standpaters. In substance, however, the action of the council had the force and validity of an expulsion. This became doubly clear when the federation convention in Tampa, having excluded the C.I.O. unions from participation, met in midnight session on November 23 and endorsed the suspension action of the council. Chester Wright wrote during the course of the convention that “the difference (between suspension and expulsion) is minor and technical. For all practical purposes the continuance of suspension would be the equivalent of expulsion.”

Another factor in determining suspension as against expulsion was the belief that such action would tend to place upon the C.I.O. the responsibility for any break that might finally occur. But this did not occur. The C.I.O. did not organize itself as a rival federation. Instead it continued to function as it did prior to the suspension with but one

difference—it energetically threw itself into the work of organizing the mass production industries.

The March 4 action of the council is therefore a recognition that its strategy had completely failed. The A. F. of L. leaders fooled no one for long with their policy of suspension as the form of expulsion, nor did they maneuver the C.I.O. into assuming responsibility for a split in the organized labor movement. The attempt to rectify its false strategy now resulted in exposing the total insincerity of its frequent unity bleatings.

The time chosen for this expulsion order is the second point of interest. The ossified bureaucrats of the A. F. of L. could not possibly have chosen a worse moment for themselves. The announcement came after months of the most intensive organization work in the mass production industries which swept at least a million unorganized workers into the C.I.O. unions; a most stubborn and bitterly fought strike in the auto industry, utilizing a new strike strategy—the sit-down—resulting in widespread gains for the auto workers; a brilliant victory in the steel industry breaking down an open shop stronghold which for half a century defied unionization; and significant advances in organization and improvement of conditions in numerous other industries. To choose this moment, when the prestige of the C.I.O. is highest and when the banners of the A. F. of L. are trailing in the dust, for a declaration of war against the C.I.O. appears to be, on the surface, an act of sheer insanity.

Yet, short of complete capitulation to the policies and strategy of the C.I.O., there is little else the A. F. of L. could do, so difficult and untenable had become its present position. The A. F. of L. strategy board had hoped that the C.I.O. would suffer a crushing defeat at the hands of the giants of trustified capital in the automobile, rubber or steel industries, and would come crawling back into the A. F. of L. meek and submissive, begging forgiveness. Instead, this organization brought down the giant General Motors, made the all-powerful Morgan interests in steel and General Electric talk terms, and is now preparing to challenge the Rockefeller interests in the oil industry. The C.I.O. stands before American labor not defeated and bedraggled but proud and victorious. Where the A. F. of L. had failed for half a century the C.I.O. has succeeded in eighteen months.

The leadership of the A. F. of L. feels the tides of sentiment run strong in the direction of the C.I.O. Frantically it tries now to throw overboard as a useless encumbrance its sham unity policy, it seeks as quickly as possible to cut itself loose from the “contaminating” influence of the C.I.O. unions. Hence the mandatory orders for expulsions as part of the new strategy which calls for clearing the decks for action. The March 4 decree must be considered by the labor movement as the opening gun in the civil war of the labor movement. There may be some bitter fighting. There probably will, since considerable sections of the building and metal trades industries still remain in the camp of the reactionary craft unionists, but it may be said with certainty that the C.I.O. has won

a permanent position for itself; indeed, to the extent that its position is in the basic, mass production industries the C.I.O. is now the decisive organization of labor in the United States. The American Federation of Labor has struck too late.

ROLE OF A. F. OF L.

The present war-like gestures from the 15 old men of the labor movement were not unheralded. In Cleveland, Ohio, A. F. of L. organizers stood before an auto plant (not for long) controlled by the United Auto Workers Union, and distributed leaflets calling on workers to join their respective craft unions; the Butte, Montana, federation of labor was ordered dissolved because it had fallen upon evil (C.I.O.) ways; an attempt was made, and halted by the courts, to lift the charter of the Columbus, Ohio, federation of labor for similar reasons; the executive council itself chartered unions in violation of the jurisdictional rights guaranteed in the charter of the United Textile Workers. These were small but significant indications of a change of tactics by the bureaucracy. Under the pressure of the receivers—the big shots of the metal and building trades—headed by William P. Frey, Green was forced to take the road of open struggle. The advances in auto and steel by the C.I.O. proved clearly that these industries had been closed to the craft unions. Embittered, they determined to strike back even tho that placed them against the mass of the workers and on the side of the employers and their satellites, the company unions in steel, and the company mob in Flint. This was the sum and substance, the content of its attempt to defeat the efforts of the C.I.O. unions to become the sole bargaining agency in these industries. Only its numerical weakness prevented the A. F. of L. from direct and open strike breaking.

Let no one think that the brilliant victories of the C.I.O. in the auto and steel industries have destroyed the A. F. of L. as a negative force in the labor movement and that it can therefore be safely written off the books. Such is decidedly not the case. The A. F. of L. still has well over two million workers organized in the craft unions, concentrated in the main in the building and metal trades councils—the former alone accounting for about 30% of the total number of workers organized in the A. F. of L. This is the Maginot Line of the craft unionists. That it is considered so was indicated by William Green himself who in his address to the convention of the building trades stated: “As long as there are the building trades unions there will be an A. F. of L.”

In the light of these considerations two possibilities for future development must be considered. The first poses the possibility that the A. F. of L., having been chastened by defeat and realizing the broader possibilities for working class organization thru the industrial unions, will capitulate unconditionally, or at least accept the premises laid down by the C.I.O., and reconstitute a unified labor movement on that basis.

The second possibility contemplates that as the fields of operation for the A. F. of L. become restricted—and they will so become as superior organization technique and form of the C.I.O. unfolds itself in ever new industries and as the A. F. of L. leaders are constantly forced to retreat upon their last line of defense, the building trades—the leadership will reply not by accepting and bending to the new realities but by lashing out with unrestrained fury against the new industrial unionism. Such a possibility visualizes a period of protracted guerrilla warfare.

WHICH WILL IT BE?

That it is not a matter of choice must be self-evident. Each side is forced into a certain attitude by very definite interests operating within the working class. On the one hand, the still persisting tho constantly narrowing caste within organized labor which seeks to cash in at the expense of the unskilled and unorganized on their peculiar and strategic position in which their craft skill has placed them. On the other, the broad requirements and interests of the new proletariat—the working class in the basic, mass production industries. The question is not, therefore, which is preferable peace or war, unity or division, but rather which is likely to occur, regardless of our wish, because of the forces pressing for solution of this problem.

On the basis of everything that has occurred in the American labor movement since the fight for industrial unionism was begun in earnest at the San Francisco convention in 1934, it must be said that a peaceful solution is unlikely, that a reunification of the two organizations of labor in the immediate future is highly improbable. The recent war-like moves of the craft leaders culminating in the declaration of war against the C.I.O. shows clearly the road chosen for itself by the A. F. of L.

There are, however, people whose rosy illusions are not shattered even by contact with the realities of life itself. They continue to prate about peace and to wring their hands in despair over the consequences of war.

Who but the most naive will believe that the hard and unbending craft leaders whose sole task has been to cut down the whole labor movement, to torture it into the mold of their particular craft union, have suddenly seen a vision and have thereby been convinced of the evils of their ways; that those who measure all events on the micrometer of the craftsman have suddenly been converted to the broad interests of the class as a whole? It is fantastic to believe so and the facts disprove it.

Nor must intelligent workers waste their effort in useless tears over the division in labor's ranks. Craft union leaders had prophesied darkly that this split would set labor back for several decades, the employers of labor rubbed their hands in glee at the prospects of a labor movement divided and weakened. Both were proven wrong and the employers were the first to admit it in terms of agreements with the C.I.O. unions.

Who but the most rage-blinded apologist for craft unionism will today state that the labor movement has been weakened by this division? We make no principle of division but we do state that there are times when conflict is the essence of progress. Where it is suppressed, progress will find its road thru division. Let us not forget that the A. F. of L. was born thru division in a period of stormy ferment in the labor movement pretty much like the present. It was hailed as a progressive step; it grew and prospered because in its emphasis on the creation of an economic organization for labor it represented an advance over the middle-class, utopian, and organizationally impossible Knights of Labor. So it is today. When the craft-divided A. F. of L. was found incompetent and unwilling to meet the needs of the mass of America's working people, when labor discovered that the hand of the A. F. of L. stretched out in supplication to the employers had atrophied and was worse than useless in the struggle against the industrial giants, then labor turned to industrial unionism and the C.I.O. Thru this division, one might even say because of it, the C.I.O. is creating a new, a higher unity of labor which is proving a potent, virile force.

NEXT TASKS

It becomes clear that the strategy of the A. F. of L. will be one of war all along the line. How, then, shall the C.I.O. meet the challenge? Obviously, the very progress of the C.I.O. in winning improved conditions for the workers is in itself a powerful medium of agitation in the ranks of the craft unionists. Also, the constant organization in the various industries will weaken A. F. of L. resistance since these craft unionists represent a small portion of the total mass now being swept into the C.I.O. unions. But there is another and more important problem—what shall be the attitude of the C.I.O. to the A. F. of L. as a whole?

It is extremely easy, because of the sharpness of the fight, to condemn the whole organization as one reactionary mass and refuse to have anything to do with it in part or in whole. Such a policy would be extremely harmful. It is a secret to no one that there are still international unions sympathetic to the C.I.O. which for various reasons never affiliated with it and are therefore still within the A. F. of L. Then, there are whole sections of some international unions (carpenters, machinists, electrical workers, painters, etc.) which can be depended upon by the C.I.O. In addition, there are minority groups scattered thruout the local unions in the A. F. of L. which are strong for industrial unionism. These forces should not be neglected. They must be organized and whipped into a fighting machine inside the A. F. of L. They can render invaluable service in broadening the fight for industrial unionism as well as in paralyzing any crusades against the C.I.O. Isolated cases of resistance to the council policy are already evident. Witness the spiking of Green's campaign against the C.I.O. union in the shoe industry in Massachusetts

by leaders of the state federation of labor, and the crushing defeat in the San Francisco Central Labor Union. In addition, the A. F. of L. organizations must be flooded with literature on the accomplishments of the C.I.O. in terms of membership, unions organized, and conditions won.

Given the continued growth of the C.I.O. and a well organized movement for industrial unionism inside the A. F. of L., the period of interecine warfare need not be very long.

The C.I.O. can look to the future with calm and confidence. It has already won for itself the place of leadership in the American labor movement and, what is more, time is on its side.

The Roosevelt Social Security Act

A Critical Appraisal

By THOMAS GREGORY

TODAY there is much talk of the new social security legislation, and during the last election it was made a primary issue by the Republican party. The complicated and superficially extensive program of the present administration has been met with undeserved applause by workers and undeserved opposition by the less shrewd representatives of the employing class. It is true that it is a long cry from the slogans of rugged individualism and the propaganda against a dole system to the recognition by the major political parties that some provision must be made for old and unemployed workers. But the die-hards of the Hoover regime and the susceptible leaders of labor seem equally naive in their rejection and acceptance of the present program.

The development of mass production through the centralization of operation and the concentration of ownership in America inevitably destroyed the self-dependence of individual workers and farmers. But despite this fact and the steady growth of unemployment, even in boom years, little was said and nothing was done to meet the need for collective action through social legislation. Until 1929, no states had even enacted enforceable mandatory laws to protect destitute old people. Measures for federal aid, though introduced in Congress for many years were never reported out of Committee until 1933. In that year, when a bill providing federal aid to states which enacted old-age pension laws was introduced, it failed to receive the active support of the Roosevelt administration and never came to a vote. Even less was done by the states in the field of unemployment insurance. One state, Wisconsin, enacted a bill in 1932 requiring individual employers to build up separate accounts out of which their own unemployed workers might receive meager benefits for a few weeks. The first federal bill, introduced in 1933, which was intended to encourage the enactment of state unemployment insurance laws, also failed to receive the support of the administration, although sponsored by Senator Wagner.

By 1934, however, the growing popular demand for old-age and unemployment insurance, of which the Townsend movement and the support of the Lundeen bill were but symptoms, created the political necessity for prompt action of some kind. The political necessity was recognized by employing class groups which previously had been highly organized to oppose all measures of social legislation, whether by the state or the federal government. The recognition was made easier by the realization that relief had to be continued on a vast scale in some form.

The new tactics of the representatives of the employing class groups were directed to continuing relief on the smallest scale possible under the more palatable nomenclature of social insurance, and in devising ways and means through which the cost of such insurance could be spread among the workers. The Federal Social Security Act which became law in August 1936 seems to be all too perfectly geared to satisfy both these objectives.

THE FEDERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

The Federal Social Security Act is a strange pot-pouri of straight welfare measures, such as aid to the blind and insurance measures to aid the aged and unemployed. If it was the hope of the proponents of this measure to get some form of social insurance over the hurdles of the Supreme Court by inserting welfare measures between the sections of the Act providing benefits to the aged and unemployed and those sections which provided for the raising of taxes for such benefits, then the proponents failed to reckon with the economic bias of the majority of the Court as long evidenced. There is certainly no sound economic or administrative excuse for combining these measures in the same Act. The problems are different, and the administration of them falls properly in different departments of the government.

The Act includes no form of sickness insurance, although the President's Committee reported the need and feasibility of distributing the burden of illness through an insurance program.

AID TO THE AGED

The Act encourages state old-age pension laws for destitute persons over 65 years of age by providing that the Federal government will match state grants to the extent of \$15 a month. In return for these grants, however, the Federal government fails to exact that the states shall meet any standard of benefits. The lack of such requirements is reflected in the fact that there were 14 states in November 1935 whose average monthly pensions fell below \$15. The Federal government also fails to require that all persons within a state shall be treated equally. The door is left wide open for discrimination against Negroes and other groups subject to political and economic discrimination. It also permits administrators to continue to determine the amount of benefits granted to an individual in accordance with his previous economic and social circumstances. A recent criticism of this aspect of the law in the February number of the *International Juridical Association Bulletin* points out:

"To continue a lower standard (than that of health and decency) because of previous want is to defeat the purpose of the law. To continue a higher standard because of previous plenty is to go beyond the scope of the law or the duty of the state and results in perpetuating social and economic differences between applicants."

THE CONTRIBUTORY SYSTEM OF OLD AGE BENEFITS

The elaborate system established for benefits to persons over 65 on the basis of previous earnings also fails to provide a minimum standard of health and decency. A provision for such a minimum, although recommended by the President's Committee, was deleted on the insistence of the Secretary of the Treasury that the plan should be "self-supporting." What was meant by "self-supporting" was that no tax should be levied on the employing and owning classes in order to meet any portion of the cost of the benefits. Instead the payroll tax placed directly on workers in the first instance, and indirectly on workers as consumers through an employer payroll tax, was increased. The second consequence of this "self-supporting" plan was to place a portion of the cost of benefits for older workers on younger workers by the device of fixing a low rate of return on contributions made on earnings in excess of \$3,000.

It has been pointed out that under the plan as enacted, "a man who, in the course of forty-five working years (from 20 to 65) secures employment for two-thirds of the time and earns wages at the rate of \$1000 a year would pay contributions on \$30,000. The monthly benefit to which he would become entitled, on reaching 65, would be \$36."

In addition to the inadequate benefits provided, the Act specifically excludes seven classes of employment which have been estimated to include approximately 13 million workers. Chief of these are agricultural labor, domestic labor, casual employees, and workers engaged by non-profit making organizations.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

State unemployment insurance laws are encouraged through a provision that employers of eight or more in states having such laws shall receive credit against an excise tax imposed by the Act. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia have already passed laws in response to this provision.

The state laws passed thus far provide little security for the unemployed. For the most part, they exclude the same classes of workers who are excluded from the contributory old-age pension law. Additional millions are excluded as a result of the failure by the Federal government to levy the new excise tax on employers of less than eight employees. In addition to these provisions which excluded certain classes or categories of workers, every state except Ohio requires that a worker must have been employed for a fixed number of weeks within the state in order to be entitled to benefits. A new type of economic state line is thus erected, and the millions of workers now unemployed are excluded from all aid until after reemployment for the period of time required by the state laws.

Workers entitled to benefits under these laws will soon find that the words "social security" bear slight relation to the actualities of the laws. The extent to which this is inevitable is seen in the recent report that

during the first four and one-half months when benefits were paid in Wisconsin to 9,600 unemployed the average weekly allowance was 67 cents per worker. The benefits granted under the state laws are entirely inadequate and will in many instances fall below existing relief standards. They are generally fixed at 50 per centum of full-time weekly wages, and have the additional restriction of a maximum of \$15 regardless of the number of dependents. Even these benefits are available for only a short period. The maximum period varies from 12 weeks to 20 weeks a year under the various laws. After the receipt of these benefits the unemployed will again be forced to turn to the uncertain and humiliating aid of private or public relief.

In return for the benefits described the workers are subjected to serious restrictions on their mobility and their right to organize and bargain collectively. Although the Federal Act requires that no state shall withhold benefits if employees refuse to accept sub-standard employment, or refuse work subject to yellow-dog contracts or strike-breaking jobs, the states have been able to emasculate even these safeguards by penalizing workers who have lost employment as a result of an industrial dispute. New York and Arizona go so far as to apply the penalties against workers who have lost employment as a result of a lockout. The strike-breaking potentialities of such provisions are self-evident and reverse even the limited recognition by the relief administration that workers and their families must be fed even when on strike.

The broad latitude granted to the several states in their choice as to the type of insurance fund has also decreased the security which may reasonably be expected from the state laws. Employers are permitted to set up individual accounts, to contract out of the system by guaranteeing employment during a minimum period of the year, and to have their contributions decreased on the basis of individual experience (merit rating). The creation of guaranteed employment funds enables employers to spread the work among their employees so that they are forced to absorb the burden of unemployment. The individual employer-reserves and the guaranteed fund also can be used effectively to check workers from quitting their jobs or joining bona fide unions not approved by their employers.

One further type of potential restriction or, at least, supervision must be reckoned as a by-product of this new legislation. The registration of all employees entitled to benefits under any section of this Act has been achieved by one stroke of the pen. The extent to which this registration will be used as a weapon against labor during the coming years cannot now be predicted. The extent to which the registration of workers will become a police tool against labor will also be an accurate reflection of the weakness or strength of the labor movement in this country.

CONCLUSION

The social security program of the present administration fails to

provide security to workers against any one of the three major hazards of industrial life: old-age, unemployment, or sickness. The phantom fears of the employing class have properly been quieted. How soon and to what extent the phantom hopes of the workers will be dispelled will depend on the economic conditions that exist when the program swings into action. Then the benefits and the burdens will both be subjected to the test of their effect on the lives of workers and on the labor movement in this country.

A PROGRAM

Although the great mass of workers cannot become fully aware of the futility of the present program until they see it in action, there is every reason to analyze it clearly and draft a sound counter-program for organized labor. The importance of this task is three-fold. It will exert wholesome pressure toward the liberalization of the existing laws; it will be a valuable factor in awakening workers to the realities of the situation; and it will provide a program under labor auspices which workers, as they become disillusioned, will follow in increasing number.

A sound social security program must protect *all* workers and their families against the three major hazards of capitalist industrial society: old-age, disability from sickness or injury, and unemployment. Such a program must be on a federal basis if adequate and uniform standards of benefits and administration are to be achieved. Such a program must be financed through progressive taxation on incomes, inheritance and profits, if it is to increase the standard of living of workers rather than spread poverty more systematically among them.

The provisions granting aid to the aged should guarantee to every individual over 60 who is not receiving wages, or other income beyond the standard fixed, a minimum standard of health and decency for himself and his dependents. The provision granting aid to workers disabled by reason of sickness or injury should provide for reasonable medical expenses and cash benefits equal to two-thirds of the average full-time wage, with a minimum sufficient to maintain a standard of health and decency. The unemployment benefits should likewise be based on two-thirds of the average full-time weekly wages with an adequate minimum. These benefits should be paid to every unemployed worker so long as he is able and willing to work but unable to secure work. Adequate safeguards must also be established so that all unemployed workers shall only be required to accept work for which they are reasonably suited, and under labor conditions which are both standard and do not interfere with the right to act or bargain collectively. The public employment offices or trade unions should become the centre where a man registers for work, and where he receives benefits if no work is available.

It is high time that labor should draft its own social security program along the above lines. Until it does so, the cost of inadequate relief in the garb of social security will be deftly but surely forced upon the workers.

Lumpenliterati

By D. SWIFT

IT is now about ten years since Michael Gold's "Jews Without Money," the first avowed proletarian book to achieve a wide public, was published. Since then some fifty novels, several hundred poems, and a dozen plays which boast of their proletarian content have appeared. Further, less than two years ago a Book Union, modeled upon the Book of the Month Club, was founded, with the purpose of helping spread proletarian works. And all along the *New Masses*, the *Partisan Review*, and some twenty other periodicals have kept the drums beating for *workers' novels, workers' poems, workers' plays, and workers' this and that*. Yet, if one asks what has all this effort to show in the way of respectable literature, one is forced to reply: practically nothing. Nearly all the proletarian literary works smell as if they were concocted in a Fourteenth Street drug-store. In the main, they are bombastically written, dishonest in their emotions, untrue to their situations, and extremely feeble technically. Of late there has been much ado about the proletarian theatre, but intelligent people view it with grave doubt. Odes' only play that is worthy of discussion is "Waiting For Lefty." It is an effective show, but as drama it is obviously deficient. As sheer reading it is full of appalling banalities, and as a stage play it depends very largely upon the speed of its action: slow it down by a third, and its rattle will be heard three blocks away. Shaw's "Bury the Dead" betrays a finer dramatic talent, but it collapses at the end. Moreover, both the Odes and Shaw plays are one-acters, and a new form in the theatre needs something more substantial to justify the claims of its advocates.

In the end the chief trouble with proletarian literature is, of course, the proletarian writers. Most of them are what might well be called *lumpenliterati*: they can't write and haven't the shadow of an idea of what constitutes literature. And they also lie, as I shall presently show. Merely to yell about the woes of workers and farmers is not to write literature. A loud speaker can do that much better. Literature, proletarian or otherwise, is an imaginative transformation of experience—experience bought and paid for, with a universal judgment upon the place of that experience in the entire scheme of things. It requires not merely observational accuracy; it requires emotional honesty—the kind of honesty which hears the still, silent voice of hope in the hearts of the most woe-begone, the kind of honesty which realizes that even condemned men in the death house occupy some minutes of their time day-dreaming of songs and flowers. Good proletarian literature differs from other literature only in that there are more of the suppressed tears of

living in it, more tenderness for the eternal travail of the silent majority of misery, more sympathy for the underman. Otherwise the two literatures are alike: they demand the same skill and the same gifts.

Most of the American proletarian writers have neither skill nor talent. This applies not only to the imaginative writers, but also to the chief critical minds of the school. Joseph Freeman's "An American Testament," the latest major work of the group, betrays nearly all the faults of his more creative colleagues. It is full of petty fabrications based, no doubt, upon Mr. Freeman's notion that a lie against the enemy is a truth in the eyes of God. One example. It appears on page 15. Mr. Freeman was ten years old, or less than three years in this country, and by his own admission on the very next page quite ignorant of the English language. Yet he says that he learned about puffed rice from the "big colored advertisements in the *Saturday Evening Post*, . . . the new American Bible. I had to save up five pennies over a week and buy a copy of the magazine before we had bananas and puffed rice."

Another and more serious fabrication appears on page 123: "When art and love failed to give us refuge against the uncomprehended brutalities of the world, we fell into ironic despair. In the spring of 1918, several friends and I founded the cult of futilitarianism." Mr. Freeman might just as well have said that he founded the New Deal or the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. The same naïveté—to use a polite word—accounts for the fact that about 40% of Mr. Freeman's book has to do with his sexual relations with Laura, Helen, Greta, and several more girls. Did sex really occupy 40% of his time during the first thirty years of his life? Does he think that his experiences were so unusual for himself or for his time?

But enough of these stray general remarks about proletarian literature. Let us examine the actual works. First, the novels. Such novels as Edward Newhouse's "You Can't Sleep Here," Jack Conroy's "The Disinherited" and "A World To Win," Tom Kromer's "Waiting for Nothing," and Arnold Armstrong's "Parched Earth" may be dismissed in short order. They are all as dishonest in their way as the novels of Kahleel Norris and Peter B. Kyne are dishonest in theirs. They are full of out-of-character speeches endorsing strikes, the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, etc. In their attempt to be raucously sympathetic with the trials and tribulations of the downtrodden, these writers have forgotten the glaring fact that most farmers and workers do not know what brought on their plight, and are even more ignorant of the dogmas of official communism.

A fair example of this type of proletarian literature is Tom Kromer's "Waiting For Nothing." Written in 1935, half fiction and half autobiography, it relates the author's experiences as a beggar, a flop house tenant, a mission stiff, and a friend of a homo-sexual, who is willing to give him food and shelter in exchange for the use of his body. Being a literate man, Mr. Kromer senses the great artistic possibilities in his ex-

periences, but not being a gifted artist he strains himself for effect, and often the result is preposterous.

Describing a place bearing the sign, "All you can eat for fifty cents"—obviously Child's—he says of one of the women in the restaurant, "This woman is sporting a satin dress. The blackness of it shimmers and glows in the light that comes from the chandelier that hangs from the dome. Her fingers are covered with diamonds. There are diamond bracelets on her wrists." One does not have to be a Fascist to say that this passage is false. Women with so many diamonds do not generally go to Child's restaurants. In another place, commenting upon the death of a man in a soup line, Mr. Kromer writes: "His eyes are wide open, but he does not move a lick. He is tired of waiting for this line to start moving. He is stretched out on the concrete, . . . I can see this stiff is lucky. There will be no more waiting for him. They cover him up with a sheet and load him in the mission truck. He is off to the morgue. There is no fuss when a stiff kicks off in a soup-line. All he needs now is a hearse and six feet of ground, and they will hate to give him that. That is one thing they will have to give him. . . . It must burn them up plenty to have to give a stiff six feet of ground for nothing." The truth, of course, is that it does not burn up anybody. The worst that can be said about the world in this connection is that it is indifferent. Moreover, medical colleges are generally glad to get unclaimed bodies. Mr. Kromer has plainly falsified facts in his effort to shock, so that his description of this episode results in bathos. Instead of being powerfully stirred, the reader doubts everything Mr. Kromer says. This is what happens when a feeble writer employs meretricious means to portray tragic situations: the tragedy evaporates.

Superior to the class to which the Tom Kromers belong is a group of writers including William Rollins, Edward Dahlberg, Erskine Caldwell, Robert Cantwell, Josephine Herbst, Nathan Asch, the later Waldo Frank, Albert Halper, Isidor Schneider, Michael Gold, and Mary Heaton Vorse. Miss Herbst's last book, "The Executioner Waits," is better than her previous two books, "Money For Love" and "Nothing is Sacred." She has learned to give more fluidity to her situations and more body to her characters, but her work is still somewhat mechanical. The same is true of Mr. Cantwell's books. Mr. Caldwell's novels are proletarian in content and honest as far as they go, but they lack creative imagination. He has not yet shown that he can transmute a group of incidents into a fictional whole. Even as a writer of mere incident he has declined. Bald and dull as "Tobacco Road" generally was, "Journeyman" is merely an amalgam of humorless obscenity. Mr. Halper's "The Foundry" is a more solid achievement than "Union Square," but he still seems lost in the novel form. As for Messrs. Dahlberg and Frank, they apparently think that the height of effectiveness is verbose unintelligibility.

As for Michael Gold, the fraud in his "Jews Without Money" becomes more and more obvious as the weeks go by. It contains one

memorable character, Mr. Gold's mother, but the whole ending of the book reads like a Columbus Circle harangue, and the writing is frequently Fannie Hurstish in both manner and content. A glaring example of this is the long description of the size of the cockroaches in Mr. Gold's childhood home, and his insistence that they were bigger than the cockroaches in the homes of "syphilitic millionaires." His straining for effect also leads him into falsehood. He says that the cafeteria in which his mother worked and in which the food was "fit only for pigs . . . was one of those super-cafeterias, with flowers on the tables, a string orchestra during the lunch hour, and other trimmings." In what bizarre dream did Mr. Gold ever see such a cafeteria?

James T. Farrell, whose books at the moment are so widely discussed and will be forgotten soon, is an industrious man with extraordinarily little skill. He writes so badly that even his staunchest admirers are appalled. And his failure to create a single character in all his books—he has written nearly ten to date—will astonish the literary historian of the future when he contemplates Mr. Farrell's one day of immortality. The three Studs Lonigan volumes deal with the childhood, youth, young manhood, and death of a Chicago tough. The sheer English in them is incredibly bad, and the display of creative imagination is embarrassing. The very same defects afflict Mr. Farrell's latest full-length novel, "A World I Never Made." The story is exactly the same as "Studs Lonigan," except that it is made a bit more complicated by the introduction of another family circle. In other words, Danny O'Neill, the central character in "A World I Never Made," is no more than a rewrite of Stud, and once again, as in the innumerable repetitions of the first trilogy, we have proof that Mr. Farrell has a poor imagination and doesn't know how to put a living human being on paper. Jim O'Neill, Danny himself, Lizz, Mrs. O'Flaherty, Margaret, Al, and Ned read like Sunday supplement people, that is, like dummies smeared with indiscriminate detail and sentimentalism. Not one of them is a predictable character, which is to say, not one of them is a character at all, but a summation of details. As for Mr. Farrell's writing, it is as disgraceful as ever. Two examples:

"Mother?," he said askingly."

"He turned. He walked on unsure legs to the dining-room table. He stood in a corner. He looked askingly at her. She knew that he wanted her to watch him, and she watched."

Fielding Burke, author of "Call Home the Heart" and "A Stone Came Rolling," is easily the only proletarian writer in America today who is worthy of respect. Her second book, especially, is so much better than anything the Farrells and Kromers have done that to compare them is superfluous. Both books deal with working conditions in the South, and both reveal an intimate knowledge of conditions there, a ponderable talent for creative imagination, and a full realization that the class struggle is not a conflict between villains and angels, but between

stupidity and selfishness on the one hand, and desperation and hunger on the other. She also knows that women are women at all times and everywhere, eager to give love to man and to accept it from him. In "A Stone Came Rolling" there is a fine portrait of a woman strike leader, Ishma. She is not an automaton of the class struggle. She is socially conscious, but she is also never forgetful of the eternal feminine in her. She confesses to her husband Brit:

"If I didn't have you, I couldn't keep up this life. I couldn't go out trying to do this and that little bit to make the world know what has happened to it, . . . go out with only my little lantern of conviction to hold out against blind eyes, go stumbling and aching, and taking arrows into my flesh—I couldn't do it if I didn't have you to come to, . . . I'd go dead cold without your heart to warm me."

"A Stone Came Rolling" is better integrated than "Call Home the Heart." But it also has its faults. It doesn't quite hang together as a novel. It is too much of a mosaic. It is also a bit vague in spots. But, despite all this, it is the best proletarian novel written in America to date.

In the naturally larger output of proletarian short stories there is a greater number of worthy pieces than among the novels. Albert Harper's "A Herring For My Uncle" is still worth reading after nearly six years since its first publication. Tillie Lerner's "The Iron Throat" is even better. It is superb technically, and overflowing with the timeless misery of the anonymous masses. Through the fragile reveries and heartbreak of a child, a whole world of fear and hopelessness is revealed. And finally, there is Philip Stevenson's terrific satire on John D. Rockefeller, Sr., in "Death Of A Century." These stories, with very few additions, make up the entire list of really good proletarian short stories written in the United States during the past ten years. It is not a long list, but it is longer than the list of good proletarian poems and plays. Proletarian poems are generally pretty raucous, false, stilted, and over-sentimental. Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Fearing, and Edwin Rolfe, especially the last, may possibly do good work in the future, but so far they have written nothing worthy of detailed analysis. Michael Gold and Isidor Schneider, for all the reams of verse they have composed, have yet to write one good poem. Mr. Gold still thinks that it means something artistically to call all millionaires syphilitic and to yell to hell with them, and Mr. Schneider's whole Marxian world apparently is located in the vicinity of young girls' thighs on top of Fifth Avenue busses. How he manages to see the proletarian revolution there is a mystery which only he is competent to unravel.

If Mr. Schneider is preposterous, Mr. Countée Cullen is absurd in a trivial way. He is a Broadway Negro, which is to say, a spiritual brother of James Weldon Johnson, which is to say, a Negro who would like to pass culturally. Ashamed of the beautiful poetry instinct in his race, and incompetent technically, his few labor verses read like the labor verses of the late William Vaughn Moody—refined, hollow, and pointless. His

fellow Negro, Langston Hughes, is his precise opposite in every way. He is a real poet and an honest proletarian, which is to say, he is a good proletarian poet, in fact, the only worthy proletarian poet in our midst. He is especially gifted in the composition of ballads, as his celebrated "Ballad of Lenin" and "Ballad of Ozie Powell" amply show. Consider the first two stanzas of "Ballad of Lenin":

"Comrade Lenin of Russia,
High in a marble tomb,
Move over, Comrade Lenin,
And give me room.
I am Ivan, the peasant,
Boots all muddy with soil.
I fought with you, Comrade Lenin.
Now I have finished my toil."

Mr. Hughes is almost as effective in his less ambitious, shorter pieces. A good example of these is "Park Bench." It is brief, but it has large and resounding overtones. It follows:

"I live on a park bench.
You, Park Avenue.
Hell of a distance
Between us two.

I beg a dime for dinner—
You got a butler and maid.
But I'm wakin' up!
Say, ain't you afraid

That I might, just maybe,
In a year or two,
Move on over
To Park Avenue?"

Of the proletarian plays, as has already been said, only two deserve discussion: Odets's "Waiting for Lefty" and Shaw's "Bury the Dead." The second, as has also been said, is better than the first, but the two of them are only one-acters, and the proletarian drama has yet to produce one full-length play of consequence. "Peace on Earth," by Albert Maltz and George Sklar is more a pamphlet than a drama. "Stevadore," by Paul Peters and George Sklar has its moments, but on the whole it fails to convince. Albert Maltz's "The Pit" is a bit more successful, but most of its characters are speeches rather than human beings. John Howard Lawson, as his latest play, "Marching Song," reveals for the tenth time, is only enthusiastically incompetent.

The so-called reportage of American proletarian literature is no better and no worse than the reporting in the capitalist press. After all, exaggeration from the left, as practiced by John L. Spivak in "Europe Under the Terror," is no less blameworthy than exaggeration from the right, as practiced by the New York *Herald Tribune* and *Sun*, the Chicago *Tribune*, and all other capitalist papers. A dispatch from Valencia, written on Thirteenth Street, New York City, is no more to be trusted than a dispatch from Seville, written in Times Square. Lying is lying no matter who does it, not even if it is blessed by Earl Browder, Joseph Stalin, and Clarence Hathaway.

Some fair proletarian reporting has been done by Erskine Caldwell in "Some American People," his best book, and by Meridel Le Sueur and John Mullen. It is not exceptional, merely competent. Mr. Spivak, two, three years ago, at least had the gift of rewriting good anti-Nazi information given to him by a detective bureau—and claiming it as his own. And he also did the excellent Red Cross article in the *American Mercury*, under the direction of the then editor, Charles Angoff. But since then he has declined to such an extent that the name of Spivak now is almost synonymous with "exaggeration." For this the editors of the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker* are largely to blame. Mr. Spivak was brought up in the Hearst and Macfadden tradition, which is to say, that at least the odor of untrustworthiness is always around him, however faint. He will always need a hard editor, of whom, alas, there are none on the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*.

And as there are no real editors in the radical press, so are there no literary critics of standing. Granville Hicks, the best informed of them all, is so blazing a convert that he has turned into a witch-hunter. He has said that there "is no bourgeois novel that, taken as a whole, satisfies me." In other words, he likes the works of Edward Newhouse, Isidor Schneider, and Clara Weatherwax better than the works of Thomas Hardy, H. G. Wells, Dostoevsky, D. H. Lawrence, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Flaubert, and Zola. Of Mr. Michael Gold as a literary critic it is barely necessary to speak. Whatever poet or novelist hasn't a good word to say for the Communist party is, in his eyes, a Fascist and a Trotskyite, worthy of being shot on sight. Mr. Isidor Schneider is a sort of shy Michael Gold, who can't get two things out of his mind: his vast misunderstanding of Marxism and thoughts of girls' thighs on Fifth Avenue busses. His criticism is even more feeble than his poetry and novels.

One novelist (Fielding Burke), three short story writers (Albert Halper, Tillie Lerner, Philip Stevenson), one poet (Langston Hughes), and two half-playwrights (Odet and Shaw)—this is all that ten years of furious activity in the field of proletarian literature has produced in the United States. Most of the proletarian writers are poor Marxists and worse artists—in short, lumpenliterati. They are a disgrace to Marxism and a nuisance to literature. If they will forget what they think is Marxism, if they will stop hanging upon the servile, ignorant precepts

of Granville Hicks, and if they will apply themselves to the understanding and practice of the immemorial canons of all art—honesty, creative imagination, and effectiveness—they might conceivably extricate themselves from the morass of boom-bah rubbish which is American proletarian literature today. It may be, of course, that lumpenliterati are incurable. In which case, let us pray for their speedy artistic demise. The vague, rapidly growing dissatisfaction, among all radicals, with contemporary proletarian literature is one of the most hopeful signs of the times. It is not new in literary history for the reading public to be more alive critically than the critics. Granville Hicks and the Tom Kromers will sink into oblivion just as surely as did Hamilton Wright Mabie and the Robert W. Chamberses.

Britain Stoops to Conquer

By BERN BRANDON

EVERYONE is familiar, perhaps too familiar, with the conventional caricature of John Bull, fatly indolent and unfit for toil, writhing in discomfort over some problem that has him stumped, and above him the caption, "Give him time. He'll muddle through somehow." It is one of those rare instances in which a nation has succeeded in making a virtue out of necessity. The tragic figure of portly Old John wrestling with problems of empire when he would like to be down at the pub taking his ale has struck a sympathetic chord in the hearts of millions whose well-being would be better served by a little less sympathy. For what John Bull really needs is more understanding. Politically speaking, he's getting precious little of it from right or left; and, more to the point, especially is this true in the tortuous labyrinth of foreign policy. In this sphere the contrast between what most people fondly imagine on the one hand and reality on the other is a matter at which cynics may well laugh and the gods weep.

We hear with ever increasing frequency, "Britain must make up her mind"; "Our policy is one of half-heartedness and half-headedness"; "Britain is drifting in her foreign policy"; "Courage and plainness are as imperatively required in foreign affairs as in home policy . . ."; "the ruling class and the governing party . . . is still divided and uncertain . . .". These strictures on British foreign affairs run the whole gamut from Churchill and Garvin on the right to Brailsford and Laski on the left.* Unfortunately, these criticisms have gained wide currency abroad where they have succeeded in spreading the impression that John Bull is muddled once again and that the National Government of Britain has no foreign policy. It is an all too common error to ascribe the mote in one's own eye to the other fellow, and there can be little doubt but that Baldwin's critics on both sides of Commons have committed this mistake. When one penetrates the ever changing crazy-quilt of day to day maneuvering, one is struck by the remarkable consistency underlying all of British post-war foreign policy. Such a definite pattern could hardly be the result of a purely empirical attitude on the part of the different post-war governments. The trouble with Baldwin's critics, and I am directing myself to those in the ranks of the Labour Party especially, is that they isolate from its context one aspect of his policy which seems to coincide with their own pet idea of what British foreign policy ought to be, such as reliance on the League of Nations, and criticize his policy as

"muddled" or "confused" whenever the government swerves from it. A clear foreign policy would be, then, one that accords with one's own standards of preference.

Needless to state we have no interest in picking at British imperialism from the side-lines; nor in conducting a running debate with it as to the best method of maintaining the empire. We are interested, however, in understanding, the better to combat it. The need for such understanding cannot be overemphasized, for there is hardly a section of the international labor movement that is alive to its responsibilities today. The illusion that the present international crisis is one between the democratic nations and the fascist powers has even blinded what should be the most conscious section of the working class movement, the Communist International, to the real significance of British foreign policy. More than this, the present ineptitude of the People's Front Government in France in its policy toward Germany and Spain and the calamitous defeat of the Labour Party in Britain in the General Elections of 1935 are in the first instance attributable to accommodating the tactics of labor to the interests of imperial Britain: in the case of France, adoption of the Baldwin Cabinet's "neutrality" proposals; in the case of the Labour Party, a virtual stampede in support of the Baldwin Cabinet's Ethiopian policy with its attendant rearmament program. Whether the Conservative Government of Britain is capable of looking after the imperial interests of the British ruling class is a matter I have no desire to haggle over. But that such a government has in effect taken over the molding of labor policy is a matter of grave concern. It becomes, then, a matter of the most serious moment for labor to appreciate fully the road it is being asked to tread and the end for which it is being prepared.

II

Since the War the British Empire, its back to the wall, has been fighting for its very life, and, as it well realizes, for the life of capitalism anywhere, everywhere. The mightiest empire in the world in point of size and political influence, it is sorely pressed from within and without. Its undisputed sway over world affairs is now gone. The optimism and self-assurance which characterized pre-war Britain has made way for a spirit of timidity and self-defense.

She is no longer the tyrant of the world market. The American colossus in conjunction with Japan and Germany have hounded and harassed her from one market to another. During the 20's she relinquished first place to America; in the early 30's she dropped for a time to third. Even before the War the handwriting was on the wall for all who would see. England's proportion of world trade had dropped from 21% in the years 1871-5 to 15% in 1913. The coal of Newcastle, which had been her prime economic asset in the rise to world hegemony, was fast becoming, as a result of the competition of foreign pits, introduction

* For example, see Laski's article in *NATION*, May 6, 1936; *Vigilantes, Inquest on Peace*.

of oil and the utilization of hydro-electric power, a serious economic liability, creating tragic unemployment and preventing the modernization of her industrial plant. Strident America, conscious of her economic and financial superiority, was waging a relentless war against the British Lion in his former happy hunting grounds in Asia, Africa and the Americas, supplying the new demand for mass-produced motor cars, gramophones and radio sets in place of the traditional Irish linen, Sheffield cutlery, and English china glass.

Hand in hand with the conquering American merchant and trader went the banker. Britain's monopoly in the money market was definitely broken, American capital, over-abundant and easy to obtain, flooding all regions of the globe. Although Britain's foreign investments at all times exceeded those of America, they had fallen way behind in speed of accumulation. British capital was now timid, indecisive, extremely careful about the type and character of the commitments it was willing to make.

Britain's naval position has continually worsened. The close of the War saw the end of her exclusive control of the seas of the world. Unwilling to enter into a naval agreement with Germany before the War providing for a 16:10 ratio, Britain was compelled by the bitter realization that she could no longer maintain a competitive naval race with America to agree to parity in capital ships at the Washington Naval Conference. The London Conference of 1930 saw her give away some more when she recognized America's claim to equality in all categories. But even more dramatic has been the emergence of Japan as the undisputed monarch of the Pacific and Italy's threat to empire communications in the Mediterranean.

The latter, especially, has pointed to a weak spot in the British Naval armor. The substitution of oil for coal in industrial processes has been paralleled by a similar development in the newest types of naval construction. Much of Britain's oil requirements originating from Iran and Iraq, accessible only through the Mediterranean Sea, it should be clear in what jeopardy she now finds herself. The once all powerful Britain must lend an attentive ear even when little Italy has the floor.

But the largest navy in the world would no longer give Britain the immunity she once possessed. The post-war development of aviation has destroyed her insularity and has very definitely made her, if there ever was any doubt to the contrary, a continental power, an object of devastating air raids from any one of a number of continental air-dromes. So that if her navy were still the largest and most powerful in the world, it could not fail to recognize that its utility has been weakened by this new enemy from the air. As the British Admiralty knows only too well, it is the Italian air-fleet, not naval fleet, that has made Malta undesirable as a British base.

Moreover, the Empire is not in the soundest condition either at home or over-seas. With an unemployed and disemployed population running to over a million since the War in Britain alone, the British

ruling class lives ever in dread of a rear-guard action. It has had the jitters every time labor has come to power, precipitating all kinds of "crises" to get rid of it: the so-called Zinoviev affair in 1924; the collapse of the Gold Standard in 1931. In 1935 when the prospects were really bright for a sweeping Labour Party victory at the polls, the Baldwin Government succeeded in capitalizing on the wide-spread sentiment for peace and collective security to defeat the Labour Party and gain its support for an imperialist program of rearmament. The victories of the Conservative Government did not indicate popular support so much as the weakness and ineptitude of labor politicians. The situation over-seas is, as to be expected, considerably worse for the ruling class. Indian unrest has not been pacified by the new constitution and Arab nationalism has by no means been allayed by the face-saving concessions to Egypt: the Indian and Arab worlds are cauldrons of discontent awaiting the proper moment to boil over.

At this point mention must be made of the Soviet Union. With the greatest reluctance, Britain was forced to recognize the Soviet as an undeniable fact. It cannot make peace, however, with the principle for which it stands. Convinced though it may be of the Soviets' willingness to remain at peace with the capitalist world, it does not fail to recognize that the Soviet Union is the material embodiment and the staunchest defender of a way of life which coincides at no point with the imperialist interests of Britain. The vital interests of Britain at home and abroad impose on her, more than upon any other imperialist power, the necessity of framing policy in terms of a broad, world-perspective. Whitehall is then in a very real sense the nerve-center of the capitalist world. As such it realizes full well that though Litvinoff can pledge the Soviet Union to keep the peace, he could not if he would pledge the masses in China or India or Germany to keep the peace against their own ruling class; and revolution, communist or otherwise, is anathema to the British Empire regardless of where it might break out. From this point of view Britain is a faithful trustee in the preservation of world imperialism.

Unfortunately for Britain, however, the new aspirants for imperialist honors, Japan, Italy, and Germany, cannot be counted upon to evince a corresponding solicitude for the fate of the British Empire. In the expansionist drives of each of these powers, Britain has demonstrated a really touching understanding of the inner and outer necessities that have forced their hands. Especially in the case of Japan, Britain has been able to raise her vision to encompass a world-perspective and has sacrificed, without so much as a protest, important economic interests on the far more important altar of political necessity. But Japan has not been content with devoting her energies exclusively to the creation of an empire in North China, to stemming the sweep of communism in the East, and to building a base for operations against the Soviet Union. Singularly ungrateful for the friendly efforts of British diplomacy in 1931, Japan has turned lean and hungry eyes toward the South Pacific.

Any move toward the south will strike at the vital interests of Britain in the Far East. This, however, does not deter Japan. While the Japanese Generals have concentrated on the subjugation of North China, the Admirals have been busy with plans for the systematic penetration of the South Pacific. In this connection, the Dutch East Indies to the South, owned by a relatively small and distant European power and containing the richest oil fields in East Asia, constitute an irritating temptation to Japanese lust. How important these possessions would be to Japan can be gleaned from the fact that while the domestic consumption of oil and oil products have increased over four-fold since the early 20's, domestic production^a has remained practically stationary. The spread of Japanese activities and projects toward the South has gone on relentlessly. Her commercial tonnage is fast displacing Britain's in Asiatic waters; her cheaply produced textile and industrial wares flood the wharves of the China coast and the Indies. Political machinations have followed in the train of economic penetration. It is rumored that Japan is negotiating with Portugal for the purchase of Macao; it is known that she has negotiated with Siam for the construction of a canal through the Isthmus of Kra. The existence of such a canal would seriously compromise Singa-
pore as an effective outer defense to the British East Indies. It is in the light of these developments that we can better understand what Admiral Takahashi had in mind when he characterized Dutch, British, and Australian policies aimed at Japanese exclusion as "unnatural."

Italy, likewise, has been no respecter of great reputations and she, too, has had her tug at the tail of the British Lion. She cannot be spoken of in the same breath with Japan either as a world power or as a threat to British security. But no power that cuts across the main British artery to the East and that demonstrates a determination to flaunt Britain "with the League, without the League, or against the League" can be ignored as a potential threat in the Near East and Egypt. Ethiopia is gone but not forgotten. The whole episode served to show in what peril aerial warfare has placed the hitherto impregnable British defenses, what kind of a campaign Britain may expect Italy to conduct among the Arab colonials, and what difficulties Britain must face in keeping open her sources of oil supply from Haifa and Tripoli. Italy, like Japan before her, has been a favored protégé of Britain's, firmly wedded to the orbit of empire. No one, I am sure, was more surprised by her recent defiance than the Lion himself. In doffing its swaddling clothes, Mussolini's Italy is a threat, albeit a secondary one, to the security of Britain.

Germany is the last, but by no means the least, of the expansionist powers that threaten the security of the British Empire. Not that her designs center around Britain or her possessions, although in war as in love nothing is ruled out. The threat lies in the Third Reich's drive for war, while nothing is so important for the welfare of the British Empire as the maintenance of the *status quo*. To what extent Britain's welfare is bound up with the preservation of the *status quo* is clearly seen by Gen-

eral Rowan-Robinson who begins his book *Security* with these words: "Peace is necessary to us for many reasons. One is that possessing great wealth, we have everything to lose and nothing to gain by war. The second is that we are exceedingly vulnerable to attack, both by air and sea. A third that, even if we do not happen to be one of the belligerents, we shall nevertheless suffer greatly from the loss of markets and the general economic and monetary chaos that follows war." Germany constitutes a grave danger to the security of Britain precisely because she is the greatest danger to world peace today.

III.

A witty Frenchman once remarked that we were marching to war behind the banners of peace. Being a diplomat he recognized that as between nations one's word is less important than one's interests. Now what a power's interests may be is by no means a simple task to assay. Especially is this the case with Britain, the web of whose activities affect, and are in turn affected by, developments in the remotest regions of the globe. The far-flung interests of Britain have imposed upon her as a sheer necessity the obligation of viewing events from a perspective that smaller and far less involved nations cannot possibly attain. Those people, therefore, who fail to recognize that the vital interests of the British Empire are coincident with the preservation of the prevailing social system in any manner, shape, or form are not only guilty of underestimating the breadth of vision of the British ruling class but guilty in far greater measure of fostering the illusion that British conservatism can be won over to a policy of collective security mutually guaranteed. This is not to deny that every act of aggrandizement of the expansionist powers—Germany, Japan, Italy—is a real or potential dagger to the heart of the British Empire. That goes without saying. But for Britain, as for them, the alternative is intolerable. It must be recognized that more than these other imperialist powers, Britain is caught up in that inextricable web of political and economic contradictions from which there is no escape. For following upon our analysis I believe it is already plain that she would not stop them if she could and could not stop them if she would.*

It is precisely this deep sense of obligation which the British ruling class now feels for the preservation of capitalism which, more than any-

* Illustrating my point is the gist of a conversation between a British Foreign Office official and a French correspondent, reported in *La Lumière*.

"In a word, then, Great Britain is wavering between two alternatives—a rapprochement with Germany, or a coalition against Germany by all the peace-loving States?"

"No, certainly not," said X. "The day that the issue would be put as nakedly as that everything would be lost. If the first solution triumphed we should have a new Sedan; if the second is adopted, another Verdun."

thing else, distinguishes post-war British policy from pre-war policy. Before the War, especially in the late Nineteenth Century, British policy was still guided by the principles of Manchester liberalism, activated by a resounding belief in the universal brotherhood of man on a cash and carry basis. Balance of Power expressed itself in identifying the maritime requirements of Britain with the preservation of the open door, free trade, and the independence of smaller nations as against any attempt by a single state or group of states to exercise political dictatorship. In carrying out this policy, Britain had her finger in many a progressive revolution throughout the world. But can anyone imagine her playing such a role to-day? Liberty and Democracy live in the toasts which imperialists drink to the life of the empire, if nowhere else. For the interests of Britain are bound to reaction with hoops of steel in every part of the world.

Unfortunately, many people mistakenly believe that because the best interests of Britain involve the maintenance of the *status quo*, she can be induced to take up the cudgels against an aggressor: a sort of war to preserve peace. There is not a shred of evidence to support this view. In fact all the evidence points the other way. In her refusal to give any but a narrow interpretation to her collective security obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant, Britain has been consistent since the war. The attempt by the first Labour Government to widen the scope of Britain's obligations in the event of a violation of the peace—the so-called Geneva Protocol—was summarily repudiated with the accession of a Conservative Government. At Locarno, Britain made her obligations still more precise, refusing to enter any treaty save a Western security pact guaranteeing the Franco-German border. And more recently, since the advent of Hitler, she has remained adamant against the pressure of France and the Soviets to enter into any mutual assistance pact guaranteeing the borders of Eastern Europe.

As we have already indicated, matters are no better, if anything perhaps worse, in the Far East. Britain refused to lift even a diplomatic finger against the rape of China by Japan. This in spite of the fact that Japan's aggression was clearly in violation of the Covenant, the Nine Power Treaty, and the Pact of Paris, to all of which instruments Britain happened to be a signatory. Sir John Simon, then in charge of the Foreign Office, expressed the prevailing conservative attitude when he declared that even were Japan technically in the wrong she was morally justified.

Britain's role in the plunder of Ethiopia was such as to leave her moral influence, as one newspaper quaintly put it, "lower than it has been in a whole century." The Baldwin Government had but two interests in this affair at the beginning: to preserve vital British interests in the Mediterranean area and to assure itself of a cut in the booty. From the first, however, liberal and labor opinion dramatized British intervention as a holy crusade of peace-loving Democracy against war-mongering Fascism. Baldwin seized the cue. Exploding shamelessly the overwhelming

sentiment for peace, British Conservatism rose up in self-righteous wrath against what it termed "Italy's flagrant breach of international morality," stamped an outraged electorate into supporting its foreign policy and returning it to office, put through in the name of collective security the largest armaments program ever adopted in peace time, and then—within a month after the elections—attempted to put over the infamous Hoare-Laval swindle for the partition of Ethiopia. I repeat, there is not the slightest evidence that Britain's interest in the maintenance of peace implies that she will lift so much as a finger in defense of collective security.

If Britain's interest in the preservation of the *status quo* is in contradiction with her refusal to enter into those engagements that its maintenance implies, one can only offer in explanation that it is a situation forced upon her by the very nature of world capitalism today: she dares not curb the expansionist drive of the "belated imperialist powers." The Baldwin Government is committed to the preservation of the *status quo*, but not at the price of endangering the very existence of international capitalism. It is only from this view that British policy in regard to Germany and Japan is rendered intelligible.

The third underlying tendency of British policy, then, is to make a deal with the expansionist powers at some other power's expense, when, as, and if necessary. Britain must stoop to conquer. In line with this policy, Britain has given unmistakable indications to both Germany and Japan in what areas she conceives her vital interests to lie and those other regions she is not ready to defend. She has, in other words, allied herself with the expansionist thesis that collective security is impracticable and that regional understandings are her sole interest. In this way, Britain is exerting whatever influence she can bring to bear to encourage the "belated imperialist powers" to attain their ends at the expense of some nation or group of nations other than the British Empire and, as we might expect, with a minimum of danger to the existing social order.

The evidence in support of this view is formidable. Japanese imperialism was given every encouragement to spend itself in Manchuria. British Tories became lyrical over the beneficent effects to the Chinese people and to the World at having Japanese "law and order" in a region hitherto infested by mercenaries and banditti. They grew even more eloquent in discussing the salutary effect of having a powerful Japanese buffer against the influence and spread of communism. But to the consternation of the British ruling class Japan, as we have already indicated elsewhere, is not content simply to play the English game. Her designs now put in danger vital British interests in the Far East. The British answer has been to build up the Asiatic squadron and construct an elaborate system of steel and concrete fortifications centering on Singapore. This, it is hoped, will discourage Japanese imperialism from seeking salvation to the South and encourage her to stand sentinel against the Soviet in North China.

Britain's attitude toward German ambitions are of a piece. She has discouraged any desire that the Reich might secretly nurture to expand toward the West. This has been a cardinal point in her policy at all times, reflecting itself more recently in the security provisions of Locarno, Baldwin's warning that Britain's eastern border is the Rhine, the "conversations" between the British and French General Staffs, and Britain's interest in a Western European Air Pact of mutual assistance. But Britain has consistently refused to become party to any agreement that would specifically discourage German aggression toward the East or, for that matter, South-East. During the 20's, of course, there was no danger of such a thrust in view of Germany's disarmament and the close ties that had been forged between the Reich and the Soviet at Rapallo. At that time it was France that showed signs of restiveness, whose design it was to dismember Germany by occupying the Ruhr and award Bavaria to Austria. From the British view-point, therefore, the Locarno guarantees were a concession extracted from France rather than from Germany. Britain's refusal to guarantee the eastern border was no more than the old game of Balance of Power directed at French hegemony on the continent. The situation today, however, is by no means analogous. Versailles is no more. German rearmament is fast becoming an accomplished fact. The remilitarization of the Rhineland has weakened the French system of alliances. Germany's relations with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Lithuania are practically at the breaking point. While Germany offers collective security to the West, she offers meaningless non-aggression pacts to her neighbors on the East but excluding, characteristically enough, so innocuous a pact with the Soviet Union. Her war-like intentions are only too plain. But where does Britain stand in this holocaust that is being brewed under her very nose? She stands, as she has always stood, against tying Germany's hands in the East. Her policy has ever remained the same. Today, however, it receives a new content. During the 20's Britain's policy was directed primarily against French hegemony on the European continent. Now it is directed against any attempt at German encirclement. Hitler must be left free to revive a capitalist economy running a nip and tuck race with impending disaster. If the smaller countries of eastern Europe is the price that must be paid, so be it; if the defeat and collapse of the citadel of world communism, so much the better.

IV.

The prospects for peace in Europe, I might say for peace in the World, are not very bright. In apportioning responsibility for this unhappy situation, the Baldwin Government must share a large part of the blame. Far from being "muddled" or "half-hearted" or "divided" or "uncertain" its foreign policy has been reared on the foundation that the permanent and abiding interests of the British Empire are coter-

minous with the defense and preservation of capitalism as a system of society and as a way of life; and that collective security must not be forged into an instrument to smite down those expansionist powers whose inner and outer necessities drive them to seek salvation at the sacrifice of States in whose preservation Britain has little or no interest. In all fairness it should be mentioned that there is a small coterie of Conservatives who disagree with the Cabinet over certain aspects of its foreign policy. Winston Churchill and Sir Austen Chamberlain are in favor of a strong and militant League, meaning a League that will maintain what is left of the Versailles settlement and check Hitler. In this they incline toward the position held by those Conservative forces in France who stand by the Franco-Soviet Pact. Their importance in the formulation of official policy, however, is not very great.

One cannot leave this sad recital without ruminating upon what might have been. The further we draw away from it the clearer we can see the outlines of a major tragedy that befell the British labor movement, and for that matter the international working class movement, in 1935. At the beginning of the year it was freely predicted that Labour would be returned to power by a comfortable majority: the by-elections had convinced all trained observers that its prospects were never brighter. With Labour at the helm there was every reason to believe that bone and marrow would have been given to the amazing nation-wide demand for collective security expressed in the now historic peace-ballot. What happened during that year to kill Labour's chances is a disheartening record of mistaken labor tactics for which there is not a section of the British labor movement, from the conservative laborites on the right to the communists on the left, that can disclaim responsibility. Instead of recognizing the role of the Baldwin Government in the League crisis over Italy for what it really was, almost every section of the labor movement rallied to its support. Imperialism as such ceased to exist. British Imperialists became the holy and righteous Knights Templar of Democracy. Peace became identical with Democracy. War with Fascism, as if there had never been a war "To Make the World Safe for Democracy." Real issues which separated laborites from conservatives were lost in a myriad of illusions: British Conservatism was now fighting the battle of labor. By the Fall of 1935 the national front that had been established gave every indication of developing into another *union sacrée*. In such an atmosphere the British electorate went to the polls. The defeat which was inflicted upon labor in the General Elections takes on, as the years go by, the earmarks of a major catastrophe.

Although British labor has suffered a major set-back, there is still time for it to profit from its defeat. In the light of what happened in 1935, its basic tasks are clearer than ever. First and foremost it must break once and for all with that ruinous species of class-collaboration known as "MacDonaldism" and adopt an independent, working class pro-

Blum's economy policy is based on methods quite similar to those employed in other countries by capitalist governments. Quite apart from the fact that Blum does not mean to abolish capitalism, he has done nothing to get under way such large-scale works-programs at the expense of the capitalists and in the interest of the masses as were formerly proposed by the labor unions and the workers' parties in France. Blum is trying to stimulate French economic life by holding out to the capitalist entrepreneurs, quite in the spirit of the principles of capitalist economic policy, new possibilities of profit and the unhampered use and possession of their gains. The main elements of Blum's "experiment" along economic lines are: First, the devaluation of the franc, concerning which we need not point out that it is a measure resulting in benefits for big capital and burdens for the broad masses of proletarian workers and non-proletarian toilers and exploited in city and country. Second, huge appropriations for armaments in which the masses of tax-payers foot the bill and heavy industry takes the profits. (The alleged nationalization of war industries was and is nothing more than a demagogic fraud by which the important French armament makers were never affected at all). Third, promoting a rise in the price of agricultural products—a policy benefitting big landowners and the wealthier upper strata of the French peasantry because only those agricultural producers gain who can produce large quantities for the market, namely, the capitalist land-owners. This agrarian policy in the interest of the French Kulaks is the core of what Blum terms the strengthening of the "purchasing power of the broad masses." The Blum policy results in strengthening the purchasing power of the upper strata of the peasantry since the beneficiaries of this policy will be the agricultural large-scale producers, the burden being assumed by the city workers as well as the poorer rural population who will also be forced to buy some of the agricultural products. As for the city workers, the rise in wages which they gained in June have become utterly invalidated by the higher cost of living. The control of prices, so proudly hailed by the government, remained, of course, on paper, and has furnished material comfort only to the comic weeklies.

The social-political legislation of the Blum Government was forced upon it by the powerful June uprising. The French Social-Democrats and the leaders of the CGT (socialist-led trade unions) hailed the social legislation of Blum as a "revolutionary overthrow," as the beginning of a "new economy." These laws are, of course, merely a reform within the framework of capitalism; in many respects they merely abolished the backwardness still prevalent in capitalist France in social-political matters as compared with other bourgeois-democratic countries of Europe. However, our main concern is not in the mere passage of legislation but in whether and in what manner social legislation is enforced and executed.

After June, the course of the Blum Government and the trade

unions upon which it rests enabled the French capitalists, who had been driven to cover in June, to undertake a counter attack the purpose of which was to sabotage and whittle away the new social legislation. First of all government and trade unions opposed any further sit-down strikes, i.e. opposed the very weapon of the workers which had proved so effective in June. Simultaneously the leaders of the S.F.I.O. (Socialist Party), the C.P. and the C.G.T. began increasingly to create sentiment against all strikes. Finally, the government introduced a bill for compulsory arbitration which was supported by the C.P. and the C.G.T. This law was hailed as a "democratic strike bill." In reality it deprived the workers of the weapon of the strike, since the text of the bill is so formulated that it enables the government and the authorities to prohibit strikes. With the aid of state-enforced compulsory arbitration, the government succeeded in suppressing the new drive for a raise in wages (proportional to the increased cost of living since June) which started in Nov. 1935 among the metal workers in the northern part of the country, and prevented it from leading to new strikes. In this the C.G.T. and the C.P. assisted the government most effectively. The state arbitrators who, in accordance with the text of the bill, must be chosen from the higher bureaucracy, have interpreted the social legislation in the interest of the bosses and have rendered ineffective the rights of the workers so ambiguously provided for by these laws. Thus the arbitrators in the metal conflict in the Department of Saône denied the workers' representatives any voice in the discipline and administration of the plants, any interference with the hiring of additional laborers, prohibited the holding of union meetings, the collecting of dues and the preparation of literature, etc. within the plant. Similarly, the authorities are aiding the owners in carrying thru in a "practical" manner the law for a 40 hour week, i.e. they obtain rulings for as many exceptional cases as possible in which a longer working week is permissible.

The main argument with which the leaders of the Communist International defend the People's Front tactics is, as is generally known, the allegation that the People's Front is the most effective measure to combat fascism. But in this respect the Blum Government is a complete failure. Although in the first few weeks of its existence it issued a decree for the dissolution of the fascist leagues, this decree merely resulted in the fascist organizations reconstituting themselves under new names. The fascist parties, especially Colonel de la Rocque's *Parti Social Français* and Doriot's *Parti Populaire Français* are still as active as before. When in November 1936, the then Minister of the Interior Salengro committed suicide because he saw no other way out in the face of persecution by a fascist scandal sheet, the masses of the workers demanded in mighty demonstration, and were justified in so doing, that the government cease its capitulatory policy to the fascist gangs and that, once and for all, a stop be put to these murderous organizations. The government contented itself, however, with having a press-bill pas-

gram on the fundamental issues of the day. Even though MacDonald himself is gone, the "community consciousness" spirit for which he stood has, it is to be regretted, a virulent life in the ranks of the labor movement where it expresses itself in a variety of forms. The spectacle of delaying the deliberations at the Edinburgh Conference of the Labour Party while Atlee and Greenwood paid a flying visit to London to consult with the Baldwin Government on matters of policy can be viewed as nothing else than a working-class disgrace.

Second, labor must break the monopoly of influence which such reactionaries as Citrine, Morrison, and Bevin exert by virtue of their undemocratic control of the Trades Union Congress. The consistent 25% of the votes which the progressives were able to muster at Edinburgh by no means reflected their true strength. The introduction of proportional representation at Labour Party Conferences would bring to an end the grip which the reactionaries have been able to wield through registering the Trades Union vote *en bloc*.

Third, the Parliamentary Labour Party must be made into an obedient servant of the will of the Labour Party. Its policies must be made to conform to the expressed will of the annual Conference.

Fourth, constant pressure must be brought to bear from within the Trade Unions and the Labour Party for a unified Labour Party inclusive of the I. L. P. and the Communist Party. In this connection, it should be pointed out that this unity will be hastened to the extent that progressive elements will be successful in their fight for proportional representation. Every effort should be made to prevent the recently concluded agreement between the Socialist League, the I. L. P., and the Communist Party from developing into a dual and rival organization to the Labour Party.

Fifth, a wide-spread campaign of education and propaganda must be undertaken to acquaint the British electorate with the real policy of the Baldwin Government in foreign affairs and to demand that Britain become a partner to the Franco-Soviet Pact. This is a tall order, and as a first step it would seem that labor itself must clear its own head of the mystifying illusions that have paralyzed its hands.

Finally, labor must demand that the Government rescind its illegal embargo on materials and men to the Spanish Government and have no dealings, *de facto* or otherwise, with the Spanish fascists.

In carrying out this program, the labor movement of Great Britain has within its grasp an opportunity to raise our expectations to a level more in keeping with its grave responsibilities. For whether there is to be war or peace does not depend upon the imperialists alone. No State—not even Democratic Britain—can wage war in defiance of a united working class demand that there be peace.

Balance Sheet of French People's Front

TO render the People's Front policy palatable to the masses, the official organs of the CI tell us over and over again that this policy is something quite different from the old Social-Democratic coalition policy and, especially, that there exists a fundamental difference between the activities of the Blum Government and—let us say—the practices of the German Social-Democrats in the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless every additional week in the history of the French People's Front Government proves that the People's Front policy is just another form of coalition policy. Let us hear what the representatives of the People's Front themselves have to say. In the central organ of the French Social-Democratic Party, *Populaire*, we read on Jan. 13th 1937 the following description of the "victories" of the People's Front:

"At present there remains in the entire country only a single plant occupied by strikers, i.e., the Cusimberge shops in Clichy which employ somewhat over 100 workers... altogether only 3500 strikers in the country. It is evident that the endeavors of the government meet with deep sympathy and understanding in the working class because the last strikes and sit-down strikes were rapidly and completely terminated without any disturbance. Let us not forget that last June hundreds of thousands of strikers were occupying plants everywhere and that the workers of most industries had gone on strike. Today there are actually no more strikes or sit-down strikes. We have a People's Front Government leaning upon the toiling masses in a country which is recuperating."

Thus the official organ of Leon Blum's party boasts with cynical frankness that the People's Front and its government succeeded in breaking the mighty extra-parliamentary movement of the French workers, the climax of which was reached in the June strikes, and that this was accomplished in the name of the country's "recuperation," viz., the undisturbed profit-making of the French capitalists. What the "*Populaire*" is saying is in drastic contradiction with such claims as made for instance by Dimitroff in his article of Nov. 7th, 1936, when he wrote that with the People's Front "the class struggle between the exploited and the exploiters" receives "a broader basis and a mightier impulse." The opposite is true. The French example shows that the People's Front does not serve the class struggle of the workers but on the contrary it leads to a hindering of the proletarian class struggle and places the workers' organizations in the service of capitalist economy and of the bourgeois state.

The capitalist-imperialist character of the Blum Government asserts itself in every sphere of activity.

sed by parliament. Fascist propaganda continues to flourish unhindered, long after the bill has gone into effect. This bill is not only impotent as a weapon against fascism; it represents an acute danger for the working class because its flexible clauses can be used at any time against the working class as well.

By its measures in the interest of capital the People's Front constantly supplies the fascists with material for their dishonest social demagogy. By opposing the extra-parliamentary actions of the workers it undermines the most effective safeguard against the fascist danger, namely, the extra-parliamentary power of the proletariat for struggle. By its laws reducing the democratic rights of the masses—as does, for example, the compulsory-arbitration bill which curtails the right to strike and the press-bill which has endangered the freedom of the press—it has paved the way for a French Bruening.

The foreign policy of the Blum Government shows its role as special pleader for the imperialist French bourgeoisie even more plainly than its internal policy. The "brilliant feat" of Blum in this respect was the non-intervention policy in Spain. The basic idea underlying the foreign policy of the French People's Front Government is the rejection of all "ideological crusades" and the exclusive concentration on the defense of "French interests." This means, in the non-diplomatic language of the common people, that those selfsame principles of democracy, which otherwise it upholds so vociferously, are just as vigorously rejected by the French People's Front Government in its foreign policy. These noble principles were applied most realistically in the Spanish situation. In the light of Hitler's and Mussolini's attempt to force a regime of blood on the Spanish people, the French People's Front Government has comforted itself with "restraint." Only when there arises a danger to French sovereignty in Morocco does it strike a more energetic note. Blum has stressed time and again in his recent speeches that the People's Front Government considers itself a "nationalistic government" and on various occasions he has called for "national unity" in facing foreign problems, i. e. problems involving the defense of the interests of French imperialism. Thus the People's Front is actively paving the way for the ideology of civil peace in case of war.

Another crass example of the imperialist character of the Blum Government is its attitude towards the oppressed colonial peoples. These peoples expected that the People's Front Government would grant them fundamental democratic rights. The net result, however, has been quite different. The great "reform" of Blum's Government in colonial affairs is the Violette-Act which concedes the privilege of French citizenship to a thin upper layer of the native population in Algeria. But the vast masses in Algeria and in the French colonies everywhere remain, as ever, deprived of rights or privileges. The Blum Government has vigorously emphasized its policy by suppressing

and outlawing the Etoile Nord-Africaine, an organization of Algerian workers advocating autonomy.

The tactics of the C.P. have shown many variations during the last few months. But all these variations have occurred within the general framework of the People's Front policy. After having criticized diverse details in the policy of the Blum Government, the C.P. at its last national conference, Jan. 1937, finally resolved to follow Blum and the People's Front through thick and thin without any criticism. Recent months have proved that the People's Front policy, which contradicts the fundamental principles of communism, has rendered the C.P. incapable of assuming leadership in the proletarian class struggle and has transformed it into an appendage of bourgeois social-democratic government policy. The tendency in the C.P. to criticize the Blum Government lasted only so long as the wave of extra-parliamentary actions of the masses, which started in June 1936, had not yet died down. Under pressure of mass sentiment, the C.P. criticized Blum's stand on the question of devaluation, on the question of measures against the fascist leagues, and especially on the question of the so-called non-intervention policy in Spain. However, since in these criticisms the C.P. always stressed the fact that the People's Front must be preserved at all cost and since it has not attempted to stimulate the extra-parliamentary action of the masses but has hampered it by coming out against sit-down strikes, strikes in general, and in favor of compulsory arbitration, its policy has had the effect of dulling the sharp edge for independent mass activity and preventing the masses from taking serious measures against the disastrous policy of the Blum Government. Simultaneously with the disappearance of the extra-parliamentary activities of the masses the C.P.'s critical tone toward the Blum Government also vanished.

In November 1936, when the indignation over devaluation and the rise in prices connected with it was fresh among the masses, when everywhere in shops and plants the call for armed aid to Spain was heard, Thorez made a speech in the Hall of the Mutualité in Paris in which he subjected the practices of the Blum government to severe criticism. Then followed the demonstrations after the death of Salengro. In Paris these developed into a powerful protest against Blum's neutrality policy. At the beginning of December the C.P. bloc in the Chamber abstained from voting on the proposed Spanish policy of the Government. Blum threatened to resign if the C.P. did not support him "unconditionally." The leadership of the C.P. beat a retreat in order to preserve the People's Front with the liberal capitalist party. This retreat was not difficult since the parliamentary criticism was never intended as a break with the People's Front policy and since, even during the period when its speakers aimed critical shafts at Blum, it had always been bent on curtailing the extra-parliamentary actions of the masses and preventing a recurrence of a general wave of strikes. Ever since, the C.P. has become more and more a pious champion of the government. At the party

conference in January 1937, Thorez spoke in very different tones of the administrative achievements of Blum than he had two months previously in the Mutualité. There he had found that Blum had failed in a whole series of problems; here he praised the achievements of the People's Front Government with all his heart. The struggle against the Spanish neutrality policy the C.P. abandoned altogether. It voted in favor of a bill which, on grounds of an international agreement, authorizes Blum at any time to stop the sending of volunteers into Spain. It granted the government its budget—the leading principle of which is the protection of the capitalists—and the new vast appropriations for armaments. It voted for a loan to the fascist Polish dictatorship. It favored the militant defense of imperialist France. It stopped demanding the right of autonomy for the oppressed peoples in the French colonies and, in the face of the civil war in Spain, is championing the defense of France's colonial territories and possessions. The C.P. explains (in an article by George Politzer in the "Humanité" of Jan. 10, 1937) that it is necessary to "organize prosperity." In the name of this organization of prosperity of French capitalist economy the C.P. preaches "order" and the "unity of the nation" so that industrial recovery should not be disturbed. The meaning of such phrases is to keep the French workers from utilizing a growing opportunity to fight for the defense and the betterment of their own standard of living. Were one to take the articles in the C.P. press seriously one might easily arrive at the conclusion that strikes and similar phases of the proletarian class struggle are really an invention of the bosses put into effect with the aid of agents provocateurs. It is criminal how, by token of the People's Front, the leadership of the C.P. abandons the elementary traditions of the working class movement and of Marxism in favor of the dusty, shop-worn slogans of bourgeois liberalism.

The Paris correspondent of the London *Economist*, a bourgeois paper renowned for accurate observation of facts, writes on Jan. 28th, 1937:

"The social unrest has come to an end. The communists at their last national congress (i. e. the last national conference of the C.P.) expounded radical socialist theories in which Marxism played only a minor part as an ideal for some remote time in the future."

Very harmful indeed is the effect of this policy of the C.P. in the labor unions where the party commands great influence which is being used solely in the interest of a coalition policy.

The June struggles succeeded in organizing the majority of the French working class for the first time in labor history. But as a result of the People's Front policy the expanded influence of the workers' organizations is not being utilized for the development of extra-parliamentary action of the workers but—and this is characteristic of every coalition-policy—for the purpose of hamstringing the spontaneous fighting mood of the workers. This situation encourages capitalist reaction

to ever new retaliatory drives which in the end will benefit fascism. As a consequence of its relative weakness the French Socialist Party never dared to participate in any bourgeois government in the face of the opposition of the C.P. Blum's coalition policy and all the reactionary measures of the Blum Government are only possible thanks to the support of the C.P. Thus the guilt which the C.I. and the C.P.F. with their People's Front policy must bear becomes the more weighty. Without breaking away from the People's Front policy a revitalization of the communist movement in France is utterly impossible. Whosoever desires to further consistently the most pressing demands of the class struggle in France—as for instance for legality of strikes and sit-down strikes, against compulsory arbitration, for the use of the weapon of strikes in the defense of workers' demands, for the support of Spain's anti-fascists—must wage war on the People's Front policy.

"Fascisme Assassin"

By EDWARD CHAMBERS

THE recent Clichy murders and their political aftermath have demonstrated two things. First, that the treachery of the Communist Party toward the proletariat in the name of People's Front "unity" is practically limitless; and second, that the French proletariat is nevertheless more united, more militant, and more ready for decisive action than most casual observers imagine. The mass demonstrations which succeeded the murders, culminating in the tremendous Sunday funeral demonstration, were greater than any in recent months, not excepting the Salengro demonstration or those of last July 14th. And they were practically spontaneous. True the C.P. and C.G.T. called them, but only because they knew that if meetings and demonstrations were not called, spontaneous proletarian activity embarrassing to them would occur. It is significant that this was even admitted by an editorial writer in *L'Intransigant*, who said that the C.P. and C.G.T. hoped, by calling, respectively, the Vel d'Hiv meeting and the half day general strike, to "channelize" the indignation of the workers. And *Paris Midi* went on to say that "the question is, can the Communist and C.G.T. leaders maintain their authority?" admitting that the right wing of the People's Front sees even more clearly than the C.P. what the ultimate effect of its opportunism may be.

OUTRIGHT PROVOCATION

The riots were provoked in the first place because de la Rocque's Parti Social Français—the reconstituted Croix de Feu—was having a private showing of an imperialist film for its members at the Olympia Cinema in Clichy, a decidedly proletarian suburb. It cannot be denied that this was a provocative act, and the S.P. and C.P. of Clichy both called for counter-demonstration. Ten thousand workers responded, ready for action. When the leaders saw the mood and size of the crowd they fruitlessly tried to induce them to hold a parade. Gendarmes and Mobile Guards were lined up before the Olympia, and the demonstrators had only commenced to surge in the direction of the Olympia—having vetoed spontaneously the parade suggestion—when the Guards commenced firing on the demonstrators. The workers answered with bullets, bricks, and paving, and the fighting went on for over an hour before it was quelled. Score: 5 killed and 200 wounded. All those killed were workers. Doubtless more would have been killed had not the workers built barricades in record time and fought behind them.

During the riot, various government officials appeared and tried to calm the workers. M. Blumel, Blum's "chef de cabinet," while trying

to create order, was shot in the buttock—the right one—(*Le Canard Enchaîné* says he was "wounded in his Peoples' Front") and had to be taken to the hospital. The workers' answer to him and the government, was "Demission Dormoy;" Thorez was rushed out to Clichy, but he did not speak, knowing that he would be too clearly branded a traitor by the workers if he said what the government wanted him to, and knowing that if he said what the workers wanted him to, the C.P. collaboration with French capitalism would be over. And while all this was going on, the fascists were quietly going home under the protection of "republican" policemen!

SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE

The spontaneous action of the workers the following day alarmed both the Rights and the working class leaders. A one hour strike was called among the workers at the Exposition, and all-day strikes occurred at a number of factories in the Clichy area. The executive of the Paris Federation of Trade Unions met under Jouhaux's personal leadership and formulated a program of action, including a half-day general strike the following day, and put forward the following demands: 1) Dissolution of the fascist organizations. 2) Immediate arrest of de la Rocque and Doriot. 3) "Epuraton" (purging) of the police and Garde Mobile. 4) An immediate judicial inquiry to fix the blame for the murders.

It is significant that these demands were first put through the C.C.T. rather than the political parties and were adopted as the demands of the C.P. and the S.P. in *L'Humanité* and *Le Populaire* the following day. Again a testimonial to the fact that Jouhaux, basically as reformist as Blum or Cachin, plays a pseudo-revolutionary role much more effectively than they. And it is to be noted that the militant actions of the workers are under theegis of the unions. True, the C.P. and S.P. of Clichy called the demonstrations which resulted in the riots, but politically they did not lead them, rather tried to stem them. But the whole Paris proletariat responded to the general strike call of the C.G.T. and paralyzed the city completely for the duration of the morning.

The same evening the C.P. held its meeting in the Vel d'Hiv, packed the place with 30,000 workers, and told them nothing. Their special edition of *L'Humanité* for the evening proclaimed in bold headlines "Union, Power, Discipline," and Thorez, Duclos, Honel, and Naile (the latter two are leaders of the C.P. in Clichy) played harmonious and harmless oratorical variations on this theme. A brass band was in the hall, and every time it was ordered to play the Marseillaise, the workers drowned it out singing the Internationale. The following day, the only section of Thorez's speech which *L'Humanité* could find to headline was "The people wish that one will realize the program of the Front Populaire."

THE FUNERAL MARCH

On the Sunday following the riots, a million workers turned out to march in the funeral cortege to Clichy. A large portion of these marched

with their trade unions, every industry being represented. These chanted such slogans as "*de la Rocque in prison, and Doriot, too*," "*Fascism an assassin*," saluted with clenched fists, and sang workers songs. Only the C.P. sections of the parade sang the Marseillaise and shouted "*Vive le Front Populaire*." Among the more interesting of the C.P. banners was one which read "*Unity! Unity! Unity! Against the makers of civil war!*" No comment necessary.

The most revolutionary group in the parade was the group of young socialists from the Seine district who marched as a military, uniformed unit. These are ideologically led chiefly by Pivert, who has recently gained status as a principled revolutionist by his break with Blum and the government. The young socialists chanted "*Workers and Farmers Government*," "*Workers militia for the Socialists*," and similar slogans. The whole demonstration was a heartening sight. The greater Paris proletariat, unified, militant, and courageous, but still blind to the fact that their leaders have tied them to the chariot wheels of the bourgeoisie to "defend democracy."

And these leaders? As soon as the greater part of the enthusiasm was over, they were engaged in conferences of the Parliamentary Majority. The C.P. deputies at first pretended to be angry and acted as though they were going to do harsh things in the way of demanding justice, but they soon calmed down in the name of "unity," and have tacitly agreed to waive the question of the dissolution of the P.S.F. until a court inquiry is completed to establish whether or not the de la Rocque of the P.S.F. is the same as the de la Rocque of the Croix de Feu. It remains to be seen what will come out of the discussion in the Chamber on Clichy, but, according to *Echo de Paris*, the Parliamentary Majority is already agreed on one proposal to put forth by way of "dissolution of the fascist leagues," i.e. to dissolve the Anarchist and Trotskyist organizations! The official journals of these are already being examined for treasonable statements by special committees. So, the C.P. is willing to forget its responsibilities to five dead Clichy proletarians and millions of other proletarians not yet dead, in order to keep unity with a government going to the right further and further each day, to suppress as "fascist" their anarchist critics, and to make—in their own witless way—more propaganda for Trotskyism.

But it may be believed that the Right journals are correct in some of their fears, that the masses are increasingly seeing through the tactics of their leaders, and will, as the crisis deepens, either force an abandonment of opportunism by these or repudiate them and proceed on the road of militant and independent class action. One thing is certain—the present course can only prepare new disasters.

Four Years of Underground Germany

WITH one blow German fascism wiped out the Communist Party, Socialist Party, all opposition of bourgeois parties and the proletarian mass organizations. With the "coordination" of the labor unions in May 1933 these numerically most powerful working class organizations in the capitalist world were subjected to the rule of Hitler Fascism. It took Italian Fascism several years to achieve similar results. Austrian clerical fascism and Polish military fascism have not yet succeeded in doing so even to this day. But Hitler Fascism achieved it within the first few months of its existence. The basis of this feat of Hitler Fascism is the fact that National Socialism could create for itself a broad mass base before it seized power. Disappointed by both the reformist policy of the S. P. and the ultra-left policy of the C. P., the masses lost faith in socialism and, in so far as they did not, the masses were rendered impotent by the wrong policy of the C. P. and the S. P. The reformist policy of doctoring sick capitalism instead of fighting for socialism; the mistaken ultra-left tactics which made it impossible to win over the masses, disappointed by the Social Democrats; these two factors combined incapacitated the strong and well-organized rank and file of the German working class to win the masses away from Hitler Fascism. Thus Hitler was able to win political supremacy without any serious resistance and to destroy the sources of strength of his opponents, namely, the proletarian organizations. Still, the majority of the workers in Germany who went through the school of the working class movement have not been won over to fascism. The majority of the German working class regards Fascism with the same hostility as do the Austrians and the Polish working class their own fascists rulers. But the feeling of impotence and the incapacity to fight is incomparably greater among the German working class than among the Austrian and Polish comrades. The political and military resistance put up by the Austrian workers against the rise of clerico-fascism, heroic tho inadequate, created a vastly different spirit among the Austrian workers than did the surrender without a struggle of the German organizations. The Austrian workers, vanquished in sanguinary battle, proceeded to correct their previous wrong policies and put up stubborn resistance against the fascist government. This prevented the "coordination" and complete destruction of the labor organizations and it also deepened the split in the ranks of the Austrian bourgeoisie between Hitler Fascism and clerical fascism. All these elements weakened the fascist dictatorship in Austria and favored the tenacious, fighting retreat of the Austrian working class.

Polish military fascism, which never had any mass base, could there-

fore never suppress the socialist labor organizations; it could not even outlaw them; they are still existing three-quarters legal and Poland's Communist Party, maintained by an old cadre of illegal fighters that survived the times of Czarism, could not and cannot be destroyed or incapacitated for struggle in spite of all oppression.

The defeat of the workers in Germany is much more wide-spread and thorough. The strength and uniformity of German fascism springs to a great extent, even today, from the painful disappointment of the broad masses of German toilers over the ignominious collapse of their mighty organizations which they were accustomed to regard as the mightiest in the world. This feeling of helplessness weighs upon the German worker, even today, as the most damaging result of the post-war events. This disastrous attitude not only paved the way for Hitler Fascism but it facilitates, even in the present, the curbing and oppression of the working class. To recognize this fact and to formulate it clearly is an important step toward the reawakening of militancy and the capacity for struggle in the German workers and toiling masses. The fatal opportunist policy of the C.P. as evidenced in the People's Front and the directives for illegal work derived therefrom does not lead out of this impasse but intensifies it.

Today the C.P. no longer has a centrally directed illegal organization in Germany. Illegal communist literature, taking a stand on current events and questions of the day and propagating communist principles, enlightening its adherents, making clear and outlining the common task, is neither sent into Germany from abroad nor produced in Germany. The tens of thousands of communists living in Germany and snarling under the Nazi dictatorship are utterly unorganized and left to their own devices. This is the sad balance sheet of four years of Hitler dictatorship and Communist Party activity in Germany.

As a substitute for communist political and organizational work the old and new party bureaucrats, who continue playing at Central Committee, Organization and Political Bureaus, in their various places of exile abroad, issue proclamations from time to time for a consolidation of all possible and impossible parties into "the People's Front for the overthrow of Hitler and for the Democratic Republic in Germany." These revolutionary dignitaries are content to abuse everyone opposing this policy as a friend of the fascists, the equivalent of "social fascism" of the ultra-left days.

The Socialist Party has created a well functioning communications service. Its old members, acquainted with one another from the past and who have remained Socialists under the Hitler regime, very cautiously maintain loose connections. Inside a narrow circle news-material is circulated, as well as a special edition of the "Neue Vorwaerts" which is published by the party council abroad. The creation of an illegal organization for the purpose of political and economic struggle is officially rejected. Some of its members have aligned themselves in illegal

organization work with our (C.P.O.) comrades. Locally, collections are made for the Social Democratic victims of Hitler persecution and their relatives are taken care of. In very isolated instances organizational political work is also being done.

The Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) is the only illegal organization which, without interruption, has sustained its organization until today and is doing regular political and organizational work. The organizations in only two districts have broken down. For a time, work in all districts was temporarily suspended. The losses inflicted by concentration camps, prison, penitentiary and death have hit our numerically weak organization (even in legal times we were only a cadre organization of some several thousand members) relatively harder than even the mass organizations. During these four years the C.P.O. has taken a consistent stand on current questions of the day, has generalized individual experiences, has worked out concrete lines of action to cope with general problems, has supplied information to members and sympathizers, has improved its conspiratorial work and has organized illegal union cadres who have repeatedly prepared and carefully carried out counter-actions against Fascism. Under the leading influence of the C.P.O. the International Relief Association was kept alive on a non-partisan basis and was enabled, with the shift to illegality, to help victims of the struggle.

The repeated attempts at negotiations, the infrequent, with the Communist Party officials in Germany as well as abroad have not led to a common working agreement. But cooperation with members of the C.P. in many localities and districts has become almost general and is expanding even further. At present the greatest weakness of our illegal work consists in the fact that the C.P.O. has not yet succeeded in creating a firm foothold among the younger generation who were not a party of the working class movement before Hitler. Upon this important task our most intensive efforts are now being concentrated.

The fact that we are the only communist organization to create and maintain a centrally coordinated apparatus even under the severe conditions of illegality is proof of our correct policy and of our realistic conspiratorial methods. That we represent but a small stream in the desert and that our successes are not greater is due first of all to our numerical weakness even at the time of adjustment to illegality. We have not the gigantic mass reservoir to draw upon as do the S.P. and the C.P. in their millions of former voters and adherents. From this also results the financial weakness of our group. Illegal work, like warfare, requires money and money again. The next difficulty arises because of the policies of the Communist Party. The People's Front policy of concentrating activity in fascist organizations has been uniformly rejected by the members of the Communist Party. The lack of any other instructions causes dejection and passivity in official communist ranks.

To the extent that our comrades come in contact with these forces they are subject to these moods of passivity.

Our activity in creating illegal political and trade union cadres for organizing and leading activities by the workers against fascism, which we have been preparing and putting into practice ever since 1933, as well as our directives concerning organized disintegration work within fascist mass organizations, are not only confirmed by the practical experience of the C.P.O. in Germany but by Austrian experience also. We reported in the Nov. 3rd issue of the "International Class Struggle" (German edition) on the agreement between R.S. (Revolutionary Socialists) and the C.P. of Austria which indicates that the Austrian illegal fighters have reached the same conclusion independently. In a comprehensive article by Gustav Richter-Wien, in the December issue of the "Kampf," the position of the R.S. in regard to the legal organizations is analyzed very much along our own lines. The article comes out against any attempt of the C.P. in Austria to transfer the People's Front policy and the directives for organization emanating from the C.P. of Germany to Austria.

On page 479 we read:

"In Austria the first consideration must be whether it is advisable to lead into the government organizations such elements of the population as are not yet absorbed by the organizations of the regime. Secondly, what the political perspective of the struggle to be carried on within these organizations is to be. If we compare our tactics with the tactics of the C.P. of Austria we arrive at the surprising realization that the tactics of the R. S. alone resemble the tactic of the Trojan Horse while the tactics of the C.P. have nothing whatsoever to do with it. Those enclosed within the Trojan Horse of old alighted, opened the city gates and, together with the apparently withdrawn besiegers, fell upon the inhabitants and destroyed the city. The Austrian C.P., however, condemns any boring from within. As a crew for the Trojan Horse the general-in-command selected a number of absolutely trustworthy warriors. The Austrian C.P. refuses to tie up the delegates it sends into legal organizations with general instructions of the illegal party. It does not send individual, trustworthy warriors but the entire army into the enemy fortress. Every one of them must disguise as a Trojan and behave as such within the city limits—the recalcitrant person who does not approve of this tactic is told that it is not so bad as all that in Troy. The siege of the fortress is to be abandoned altogether because the C.P. eschews the boycott in principle. Apparently it expects to overthrow the despotism, or better, the leadership of such clubs, by votes which do not exist in these organizations and by rebellion which is suppressed by the police. And so that no voters and no rebels should be lost by their joining the besieging part of the army, the party preaches against their exit. It fails to see that Troy is not at all an autonomous state that can be conquered, that the stroke of a pen could reduce the "conquest" to naught. Fey was just

about to conquer the Austrian Heimatschutz when it was simply dissolved out of his reach."

On page 481 we read:

"The power of resistance of the proletariat does not grow while the workers find themselves in the legal organizations. If one does not voice one's condemnation of the existing regime energetically at the machine in the plant, but cautiously does it out at an EG meeting, that does not by any means make it politically a more realistic force. Thus, one might succeed in certain cases to release politically less conscious feelings of resistance in non-militant layers of the workers, but to prevent any exaggeration of this grain of truth it suffices to state that the success of a labor movement in industry—even in a hundred per cent membership of an EG and by most complete utilization of all legal positions—depends exclusively upon the objective economic situation of industry itself and, resulting therefrom, the eagerness to fight among the rank and file."

On page 482 we read:

"Any attempt at building up organizations under fascism which in their character, extent and working methods resemble the old democratic mass-organizations must end in results similar to an attempt at growing potatoes on a glacier. We do not deny that militant work among the masses can be accomplished. We do deny that one can assemble the masses into broad organizations under the present day conditions of Austrian fascism."

It is indeed disheartening that this must be pointed out to the communists by the Austrian R.S. In Germany it is our duty, supported by these Austrian experiences, to overcome as speedily as possible the passivity caused by the wrong policy of the Communist Party of Germany.

Jaurès: A Pre-War People's Fronter

By JIM CORK

THIS study of Jean Jaurès* serves simultaneously as a history of the French Socialist Party up to the World War of 1914. It is a valuable and indispensable book. Its thoro documentation makes abundantly clear why the social patriotic position taken by the French Socialist Party in support of the imperialist war aims of its own bourgeoisie was no sudden and inexplicable phenomenon, but on the contrary quite a logical and inevitable result of three decades of development which saw the French party sink deeper and deeper into the swamps of reformism and social chauvinism. On the eve of 1914, the French Socialist Party was almost unanimously lined up behind the policy of defense of the bourgeois "Fatherland" against an anticipated attack by another power, especially Germany.

Of this suicidal policy, fruit of a basic attitude of class collaboration, of ministerial-cabinet-socialism, there was no more eloquent exponent in the French socialist movement than Jean Jaurès. Graduating into the socialist movement from the ranks of bourgeois radicalism, the achievements of the French Revolution remained for him the supreme event of world history, the touchstone whereby to measure and to direct future history:

"Is the genius of the French Revolution spent? Do you not find in the ideas of the Revolution the means of meeting all the questions, all the problems that appear? Did not the Revolution produce an immortal wisdom that could face all the difficulties of the changing milieu in which we live?"

For 30 years, with great gifts as speaker, writer, organizer, Jaurès, under the halo of the bourgeois past, labored assiduously to blunt the edge of revolutionary proletarian intransigence in the interests of an evolutionary coalitionist policy. Always the tradition of French Jacobinism gave the peculiar tinge to his brand of reformism on whatever question was being argued. It intensified his nationalist outlook as against a socialist internationalism. He regarded himself above all as "a citizen of France." To him the nation and not the class was the basic social unit, and he was therefore against a policy of clear-cut class struggle which would place the proletariat in clear opposition to the bourgeois state. The French bourgeoisie was in his opinion "... generally ... liberal and humane. . . ." For the same reasons he opposed violent revolution as the disrupter of a desirable national unity. The Socialist movement as he conceived it was to be a continuation of the democratic movement of

the French republic. It would be built on a multi-class base including workers, peasants, shopkeepers, small producers and even elements of the big bourgeoisie many of whom could be convinced of their social duties as the "descendants of the real republicans, i.e. those who made the French Revolution. . . ."

Socialism, said Jaurès, would result "not from the violent and exclusive agitation of a social fraction, but from a kind of national movement." The same nationalism determined his opposition to the socialist attitude on colonies and made him a rabid supporter of imperialist expansion: "... it is impossible to stop expansion, suddenly to halt the vital energies of the nation." Jaurès never requested independence for a single French colony. And finally, of course, his intense nationalism, his patriotism led him to line up foursquare behind the defense of the bourgeois "Fatherland." It was a supreme irony of history that Jaurès who was more responsible perhaps than any other individual inside the Socialist movement in helping to tie the French working class to the war chariot of French Imperialism was assassinated at the outbreak of the war as a radical!

In the 1890's and 1900's Jaurès' thoroughgoing reformist policies were fought internationally by Lenin, Luxemburg, Plechanoff and Kautsky, the latter two then still defending a revolutionary Marxist position, and inside the French party by Lafargue (Marx's son-in-law), Guesde, Vaillant and Hervé. The defection of the latter three to Jaurès' position on the World War (Lafargue had committed suicide in 1911) symbolized the unity of the party around a reformist program. The betrayal by the French party of the international ideals of socialism was already foreshadowed!

The arguments and counter arguments by both wings on all questions involved, while there was still a basic division in the party, are copiously documented by the author. Tho providing interesting and instructive reading their reproduction in any detail would not, perhaps, by itself be important in view of the fact that the reformism, tho reflected in its specific French aspect, is the traditional reformism of all times and places. What prompts a reminder of its shades and nuances, however, is the tragic fact that exactly the same arguments are being repeated by the line of the People's Front, the new reformism of the Communist Parties. The parallelism of Jaurès' arguments to those of the People's Front line is indeed startling all along the line. Herein lies the contemporary significance of their repetition, as warning to those who are inviting a similar disaster to overtake them today as overtook the "People's Front" of 1914.

Take the question of coalitionism for instance. In 1899 Jaurès hailed the entrance of Millerand, a socialist, into a bourgeois cabinet with the following words:

"It is indeed a momentous occasion when the bourgeois republic proclaims its need of socialist forces in a struggle against a military

coup d'état. . . .” Substitute the word “fascist” for the word “military” in the quotation and you have the People’s Front line in perfect replica.

Or take the question of colonies. Jaurés’ attitude has already been indicated above. However, he had to save his socialist conscience. So he argued that France must be motivated in its colonial relations “by justice and goodness. . . .” And it could be convinced to do so because it was built on the democracy of the French Revolution. The position of the People’s Front is absolutely identical today. The shackles of the multi-class coalition policy of the People’s Front tied the C.P. willy-nilly to the same policy as that enunciated by Jaurés. The C.P. has also called for more humane and democratic treatment of the colonies (just as Jaurés) but has not, and cannot, come out for the independence of the colonies so long as it supports the People’s Front policy, for the People’s Front Government is still the government of a capitalist state. The C.P. of Spain has not come out for the independence of Spanish Morocco. Ditto for the French C.P. in the case of the French colonies. It is the same disastrous logic working from similar opportunistic axioms.

Now the question of national defense.

“France’s first duty,” Jaurés said, “must be to improve the national defense and she must always be ready to rise to the last man in defense of her soil. . . .”

Notice now the further development by Jaurés of his position into the now famous one of Jacobin defense:

“ . . . France must follow the idea of the nation-in-arms. France must insist into the army the nation’s moral principle, the democratic and republican spirit. . . . France must be in a position to ally herself with the republican and democratic movements in all countries. The fusing of the army with the democratic nation . . . eliminating the aristocratic officers by filling the military schools with men from the ranks. . . .”

This is too perfect. It can be paralleled almost word for word from issue after issue of *L’Humanité* or the articles of Dimitroff.

The comedy could be dragged out still further, but it is unnecessary to belabor the point. In concluding, however, I can’t refrain from quoting the following from Jaurés which is so characteristic of the spirit and even letter of the People’s Front today that it might have been taken bodily from the spoutings of Thorez or Diaz or Browder.

Jaurés hoped “ . . . for an alliance uniting separate organizations for common action against financial oligarchy and reaction and for the program of minimum socialist reforms, *those reforms which altho not touching the bases of the existing order, will do much to ameliorate the lot of the workingman and to pave the way for a social transformation.*”

(my emphasis—J.C.)

The C.I. in supporting the People’s Front policy is repeating Jaurés’ reformist line of subordinating the independent proletarian class struggle to an alliance with the supposedly democratic bourgeoisie. The repetition is doubly criminal today in view of its historically demonstrated falsity

and the fact that under the conditions of capitalist decay more clear now than in Jaurés’ time the democratic bourgeoisie inevitably becomes more reactionary, becomes the instigator of fascism as a last effort to maintain its shaky rule.

The Radek-Piatkov Trial

IN examining the Radek-Piatkov Trial, two facts must be brought out clearly. The one is the success of socialist construction in the Soviet Union and the social, economic, military and cultural progress which such success implies. The other is the growing danger of an imperialist attack on the S.U. and the intensified effort on the part of the most aggressive imperialist powers to carry on their disruptive activities inside the soviet state and to seek support among native elements. Only when we consider the great national and international significance of the soviet achievements and the nature of the forces that wish to destroy them can we understand the full significance of the charges raised against the defendants. That among them we find men like Radek, Piatkov, Sokolnikov, and other old bolshevik leaders, adds great gravity to the charges. We wish to say frankly that the trial did not reveal anything which would allow us to say with absolute certainty to what extent the charges are true and the accused guilty of the crimes which they themselves confess to have committed.

Serious doubts concerning the validity of the evidence arise from the fact that the punishment meted out to Radek and Sokolnikov, who stand convicted of having instigated the crimes, was less severe than that to which those were condemned who had served as mere tools. In a case where the life and prestige of old revolutionary leaders are at stake, we deem it our duty openly to express our doubts and to call attention to the reasons that prompt us to do so.

One thing, however, the trial revealed very clearly. The defendants had resorted to deliberate lying in order to gain readmission into the party. In spite of their recantations they adhered to their former ideas and acted accordingly. Such actions reflect a very serious impairment of the morale of the party and help prepare the ground for terrorism and the machinations of the class enemy.

Under the proletarian dictatorship people who engage in terroristic activities or prove to be guilty of sabotage, espionage and high treason, must receive the severest punishment, especially when they occupied positions of leadership.

However, in advocating that they be dealt with most rigorously we can’t help raising the question of how it happened that comrades who

held responsible positions could be led so far astray and such a serious stage of demoralization develop in the S.U. To give a correct answer to this question is of utmost importance, especially if the concrete charges made against the defendants should prove to be true.

The conclusion that we can safely draw from recent events is that something is fundamentally wrong in the internal relationship of the party. A regime which is against the voicing of any criticism and expression of doubt concerning the correctness of the party line, against free discussion and inner party democracy and for the rule of the leader—outwardly recognized, but inwardly rejected by a considerable number of party members—such regime cannot be sound. The dangerous effect of its unhealthy policies must make itself increasingly felt at a time when non-party people are granted more rights, a measure which is in itself necessary and correct. The full rigor of the law must be applied against all plotters, but it is more important to remove the cause of their crimes. The only way to overcome the present stage of demoralization is to re-establish inner party democracy and reopen free discussion so that the membership can express and clarify its views and correct wrong notions before they develop into destructive ideas. If the party refuses to follow this road and further suppresses all opposition, the effect of its policy on the Communist International and the international labor movement will be disastrous.

We are now, as we were before, strictly opposed to the counter-revolutionary attitude which the Trotskyites assume toward the S. U. and hold Trotsky and his followers morally responsible for what was done in the name of Trotskyism against the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet state.

We therefore protest as we protested at the time of the Zinoviev trial any opposition against the line of the C.I. and C.P.S.U. being automatically identified with fascist Trotskyism and branded as counter-revolutionary. We say this with special emphasis on our opposition to the opportunist line which the party follows since the 7th Congress of the C.I.

We also protest very vigorously against the slander campaign which the Comintern parties wage against the P.O.U.M. We especially protest against its being identified with the counter-revolutionary elements inside the S.U. Unspeakable damage has been done to the Spanish revolution by this campaign.

We say, finally, with regret that the trials have hurt the prestige of the S.U. in the bourgeois world and have shaken the belief of the international working class in the proletarian dictatorship and in the model character and stability of the Soviet regime.

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